

## PALESTINE REVISITED IN 1895

The Old — The New.

### THE OLD

A SCORE or so of old men with white beards seated at a long table covered by open volumes of the Talmud. The sacred Scroll of the Law is enshrined at their left, and behind them we see ponderous old tomes, tight fitted into the alcove of a vault-like chamber, with quaint curves and angles. Is not this some souvenir from the brush of an old master? No, old-world picture as it is, and appropriately framed, it is from a photograph of an actuality of to-day. I saw it not so many years ago in Jerusalem, and anyone is welcome to see it to-morrow, or next year, or haply a hundred years hence. The very faults in execution are silent witnesses to its truth. The awkward crookedness of the bench, the angularity of the hanging lamps, the uncouth commingling of caps and beards, are necessary results of a camera focused at a disadvantage. The cheap and ugly clock in the corner could not have been introduced into any sketch of the imagination. Its inartistic character is a guarantee of its genuineness. Anyhow, the picture is a real one, and a keen eye will be able to decipher the Hebrew tablet in the background, which identifies the scene. Moreover, the photograph, such as it is, is at least a triumphant testimonial to the brilliancy of the light in the deepest recesses of a Palestinian city interior.

For those whose European eyes cannot decipher the Hebrew it may be at once stated that this is the likeness of a group of inmates in the *מושב וקנים*, or "Old People's Rest," at Jerusalem. They are assembled in the principal room of the institution—assembled for prayer—but, in accordance with our good old Jewish custom, they are "learning" before they pray. The saintly-looking veteran in the centre is Rabbi Kaddish Halevi from Wolkowisk. Though a comparatively young man of seventy, he is, in more respects than one, the head of the Yeshibah, or Institution. He has sixty-five male colleagues and forty-seven female. Many of them are over eighty years of age. One good old dame, Madame Breina Spira, from Zoslauv, is over ninety-seven years old, Daniel ibn Joseph Tuil, of Smyrna, is ninety-two, and Salem Rosanawski, of Kishinew, ninety. The tall, emaciated-looking man standing in front of the curtain of the Ark is a smith, Abraham Skalir. The previous occupations of the men are all detailed in the annual report of the institution. Three of the men were colonists, one a doctor, several teachers, Shochetim, builders, tailors, peddlers, a brass worker, an *אורג ציצית*, "weaver of fringes," and so on. One pleasing but very Russian feature about the charity is that connected with it we find not a Soup Kitchen, but a *Tea Kitchen*. For two hours after nightfall every applicant is entitled to a glass of hot tea gratis, and there are four hundred glasses or so dispensed every night—a happy form of benevolence which dimly recalls the generous food doles of the mediæval monastery and convent.

What strikes one most about the inmates is the refinement and intellectuality of their features. It is a

workhouse, where aged failures in the struggle for existence are entertained, free of expense. Here they are permitted to pass away in peace. Not here will we meet with degraded types of the European inebriate or jail bird. Nor is there any thing characteristically Jewish about the appearance of our friends. In fact, there is no place like Jerusalem, where all nations meet, for convincing one of the fact that there is no characteristic type for the Jewish countenance. The old man at the corner of the table, fourth to the right of R. Kaddish, could sit as a model for Tycho Brahé, the man behind him looks like a Moor of Venice, and some of them are just Moujiks and nothing more. But they are all representative of one very fascinating aspect of Judaism, which it is the fashion to doubt or decry. It is not only in India that the Yogi, or contemplative Sage, is to be met with, who, having fulfilled his whole duty as a man, retires from active life to meditate on the here and the hereafter. We have our Jewish Yogis even outside the dazzling effulgence which emanates from the Zohar. Such an one was our dear friend Mr. Zimmer, and of such is the bulk of the Moshab Zekeinim. They work not, neither do they spin, but the world is better for their being in it, even if not of it. It is refreshing to think that not everybody is in a hurry, not everybody busy money-getting or money-spending, and that a few there are who, like the tertiary creatures still to be found in the Jordan as living fossils, are survivals of bygone and more tranquil ages.

The present position of the building is just where one would expect to find it. It is in the oldest part of the city, near the Meidân, and about two minutes' walk

from the chief Ashkenazi synagogue, which is built on the *חורבת ר' יהודה החסיד*, the "Ruin of R. Judah the Pious." It occupies two sides of its narrow lane—in Jerusalem proper there are no streets. On the one side is the men's house, the property of the institution and registered as "wakf," or charity property. The women occupy the quarters opposite, but their house is merely hired. Still it has the advantage of possessing a fine view of the Temple area from the roof. Fine, however, as is the position from the sentimental point of view, the site is necessarily not salubrious, and although our old people seem to thrive, they would have more fresh air outside the city. There we have the real "New Jerusalem," and there the Jew's heart must warm within him when he sees the neat clusters of trim little stone houses, which have grown up as if by magic in the last decade. There are many such clusters now from the quaint rock dwellings of the Troglodyte men of Yemen, which overhang the valley of Hinnom, to the neat cottages of the Sir Moses Montefiore Testimonial Committee's Building Societies.

Street nomenclature is in its infancy in the East and therefore picturesque. "The Right Hand of Moses" and "Nathan's Village" now replace the squalid huts of the squatters who had to be turned out of the Montefiore Garden seven years ago. They constitute a very creditable approach to the city as one leaves the railway station, and I was told that the sight of their Sabbath lamps gleaming out of a hundred windows on a Friday night was the prettiest thing to be seen from the Lechmere Hospital opposite. "A Hundred Gates," and "Montefiore Memorial," "The Gate of the Corner

Stone," "Moses Gate," "The House of Israel," "Rechoboth," "The Inheritance of Seven," "Stone of Israel," and "Tabernacle of Peace," are some other names that bring us by easy stages to the country end of the Jaffa Road. Here, close by the watch tower, which marks the uttermost end of outer Jerusalem, for a Turkish Octroi allows no dwellings on the wrong side of the guard, the Moshab Zekeinim has purchased a plot of eleven thousand square metres, and commenced a new building after the model of the *Altersversorgungsanstalt* in Berlin. It was induced to do this by the munificent promise of thirty-five thousand roubles from a Russian millionaire. But the millionaire was litigious, and after he had paid five thousand roubles, behold, the High Court of Justice at St. Petersburg placed a *distringas* on the whole of his property, and he cannot continue payment. And so the building is stopped for the present.

Perhaps the best plea for the Moshab Zekeinim is a quotation in the *ipsissima verba* of its managers' "petition to pious Ladies and gentlemen" which, though its English may be halting, is in sentiment irreproachable. "It is beyond our power," they write, "to sustain all its wants. God knows we have done the utmost it offers, but we must now appeal to the generous and pious for aid. Have compassion, Pious Folk, and take part in the meritorious subject. Please obtain for yourselves memberships of this society by paying the member's fee and the reward for your piety and generosity will be exceedingly large in this world and in the world to come. . . . Please grant your support to this society, and the Almighty will grant fulfilment of all your desire and will permit you to

live and rejoice in the restoration of Zion and Jerusalem. . . .

"Who of you, Brethren, does not feel for the old and feeble, poor and helpless, who have none to look after them, no one to care for them, who would eagerly wish to spend their last days on earth in prayers and study of the holy Torah in the holy city of Jerusalem were there but a corner to receive them."

#### THE NEW

A very different picture, but in its way quite as satisfactory, would be presented by a portrait group of teachers and scholars of the Lionel de Rothschild School at Jerusalem. The contrast is an invigorating one, for youth is always more cheering than age. Here we would find no poky interior, but a substantial modern building with European windows and shutters, and neat wooden palings and the olive tree to supply local color. Nothing but the fez, which marks the official element throughout the Sultan's dominions, would distinguish the group from a European one of similar character. The very bars across the windows would only be witnesses to the fact that boys will be boys even in Palestine, and just as the ground-floor windows that "give" on College "Back" in England protect the student from themselves, so is the "interne" of our school protected from unlicensed evasion.

The physiognomies of the students vary more even than those of their elders in the Moshab Zekeinim. And necessarily so. For in the Technical School we find a heterogeneous assembly of different nations, and happily of different creeds. Jews can well be proud of the fact that in the hotbed of religious fana-

ticism, they were the first to throw open their doors to all religions, and Mohammedan and Christian alike testify to the excellence of the work of our Jewish schools.

The young men now learn the trades of blacksmith and joiner, locksmith and mechanic, coppersmith and brass founder, sculptor and carriage builder. It is a veritable university of technical education. It draws its pupils from Palestine and Turkey, and Russia and Roumania and even Greece; and it sends them back, when they have passed through their apprenticeship, to Egypt, to the Palestine Colonies, such as Rishon and Pethach Tikvah and Samarin, to Belgrade, to Cyprus, to Rhodes, and even to Marseilles; and wherever they go they earn a decent living by the work of their hands. In Jerusalem itself the work they do is indispensable. The upper stories of the hospital and hotel there are fitted with a water supply entirely made by the pupils. They have constructed steam-engines and pumps and all the mystic paraphernalia of modern sanitation. Certainly some parts of a ten-horse power engine which was shown to me were made of brass instead of iron, but that was because we have not yet an iron-foundry there.

The Technical School cannot at once make handicraftsmen of all our Oriental co-religionists, but its pupils are already spreading afield throughout the East and disseminating love of work and respect for the school among distant Jewish communities. I have myself come across young men trained there who are now earning decent livelihoods as artisans, not only in Palestine, but in Cyprus, and even in Egypt. For the rest, thanks largely to English philanthropy, the num-

ber of workshops is constantly increasing, and their efficiency is growing more and more marked.

Nowhere is the prejudice that Jews will not work with their hands so rapidly becoming antiquated as at Jerusalem. Convents and mosques, hospitals and churches, villas and hotels, all are dependent on the Technical School for the provision of fitments to supply them with the appanages of civilization. The folding doors of the Convent of St. Joseph move so smoothly and look so smart that they would do credit to the most efficient cabinet-makers of London or Paris. There are carved book-cases at the school made on the premises and by the scholars which would rouse a bibliomaniac to envy.

But a single instance will perhaps evidence more vividly than any mere words the moral benefit derived from the existence of such an institution in Palestine. When I reached Jerusalem, I was informed that its scholars were actually manufacturing iron gates for the tombs of the Patriarchs at Hebron, and that the gates had been ordered by the Sheikh and his Ecclesiastical Board, who were pressing for delivery. Now, as has been said before, if there is one thing more sacred than another, or more jealously guarded by the Turk, it is this Mosque which is erected over the Cave of Machpelah. Hardly half a dozen Europeans have been allowed to visit it. The last occasion—but one—was when the Dukes of Clarence and York went there with Major Conder. They obtained the requisite special firman from the Sultan, and a regiment of soldiers to protect them, and yet there was a riot in the narrow white lanes of Hebron when they entered the Mosque.

Well, I was allowed, with two Moslem pupils, to



penetrate there disguised as a mechanical adviser to our school. I wore a tarbouche and carried a measure in my hand, and some bottles of gilding wherewith to make beautiful the gates we had brought with us and were about to set up. I dared not talk for fear of betraying myself as a very ordinary tourist, but before we were accorded admittance, a preliminary palaver with the Sheikh of the Mosque was necessary, and, with the greatest solemnity in the world and with Oriental gesture, I had to vehemently negative the idea that the gilding would come off in the rain.

I visited also the Evelina de Rothschild School for girls, and the admirable Villa which the Association had just acquired from the Latin Patriarch for its new premises. Mdlle. Fortunée Behar, its energetic *directrice*, was determined to conduct her school on English lines. Mahanaim, as the Villa is called, was built five or six years ago by the bankers Frutiger, and inhabited by them till they left Jerusalem. Its windows command an ideal view of the Mosque of Omar, and the Temple area, and the Mount of Olives. Its garden is full of fine trees, and its wells more than amply supplied with water. Both timber and water are valuable commodities at Jerusalem, and will somewhat compensate for the increased cost of maintenance of the school. Little, if any, alteration is needed in adapting the interior for school purposes, and my friend, Mr. Richardson, one of the Surveyors to the Board of Trade, went over the premises, and was satisfied as to their being in a good state of repair. There were difficulties as to title, but these have, I understand, been now circumvented, if not overcome. What difficulties there had been were evidently due to a very real jealousy on the

part of the Turkish officials, with regard to the ever-increasing influence and number of Jews in Palestine.

The *Alliance* schools at Jaffa, for boys and girls, also call for praise. Jaffa has become almost a Hebrew port. The shop-fronts are crowned by Hebrew names and sign-posts. The market is a Jewish forum, and the very infants speak Bible Hebrew. There are few things more touching to the Jew returning to the land of his forefathers than to find his little co-religionists doing their lessons in Hebrew, aye, even prattling in it, as a very living language—the language of play.

## SALONICA

Synagogues — A Kippur Siesta — The Talmud Torah — Inscriptions and Manuscripts — The Donmé — Volo.

### SYNAGOGUES

I ARRIVED at Salonica on Friday, the 23d September, 1898, and attended the synagogue on Sabbath, the 24th, as early as twenty minutes to seven, and already the Sepher was being read. On the morrow, Selichoth began at midnight and the whole service was over at three in the morning! Minchah went on all through the afternoon of Erev Yom Kippur. To make up for the excess of prayer, Olympus frowns in front of my window, and reminds me that all the world is a huge Pantheon.

Most characteristic is the marble flooring in these Shools. The seats are movable benches, and sometimes chairs. The Sicilians possess quite gorgeous purple or crimson armchairs with קליה or the donor's name embroidered on the back with plenteous gold. But each form is but the evidence that years ago the Salonicans, like the Persians of to-day, squatted on the ground as they prayed. Accommodation for the female synagogue-goers was none too abundant. The galleries, or corners reserved for them, are scrupulously trellised or curtained off from the indiscreet gaze of the opposite sex. They were just like the Shelters provided for the Harem beauties in the theatre boxes at Cairo. But I did not hear that the morals of the general public are thereby

improved; *au contraire*. But I am bound to say that the richer kind of Salonica Jewess, who has abandoned such Orientalisms, "enjoys" a worse reputation than her sister. The Jewesses are not ugly. The national costume is becoming—a flat cap terminating in a broad green (occasionally red) sash about a foot long and six inches wide, with a white lace tunic something like the Angelica-Kauffmann bodice.



CATALAN SYNAGOGUE AT SALONICA

Of all the synagogues that of "Arragon" seemed the most picturesque. It is large, and the Almemar is a lofty dais at the extreme west end, gallery high. The Ark is also highly placed, and many elders sit on either side on a somewhat lower platform. "Italia" was more striking, for the synagogue is but half-built, the floor not yet bricked in, and the galleries of rough lathes, and yet the women climbed up the giddy steps of the scaffolding, and the hall was full of worshippers. The sacred appurtenances were

borrowed from diverse Chevras, and, of course, there were lots of lofty thirty-hour candles. At "Fakima Modianos" these Kippur-lights were Europeanized by having donors' visiting cards neatly attached to them with silk ribbons, as is our way with floral offerings. At none of the Shools, except the Ashkenaz, was there any prostration either for the Abodah or for Alenu, but there was Duchan for all services except Minchah. R. David Pipano preached for ten minutes before Neilah, of course in Ladino. Indeed, the amount of Ladino introduced into the service was quite astonishing. Most of the Techinnoth, Confessions, and Selichoth were in the vernacular, and the Reader seemed really moved as he held forth in that language, but his audience seemed less impressed.

#### A KIPPUR SIESTA

At all synagogues and Chevras except the Ashkenaz, there was a grateful interval of two hours between Musaph and Minchah, during which time some (e. g., your humble servant) retired for a siesta, but many flocked to the *cafés*, which were filled with a crowd that eagerly discussed Colonel Picquart's punishment, but neither smoked nor drank. At service time the streets were deserted. More than half Salonica's eighth of a million are Jews, and three-quarters of the trade is in their hands. All the boatmen of the port are Jews, and on Saturdays no steamer can load or discharge cargo. Porters and shoeblacks, bricklayers and silk hands, are all Jews. The Ashkenaz ritual is like the Northern Italian, the pronunciation Sephar-

di, and the congregation more noisy and vehement, but to me hardly more familiar than the rest. I am bound to admit that I did not visit it during the siesta interval. Everybody is "called up" on Kippur. The three last verses of the fourth portion are repeated over and over again to each member in turn. This is the Shura, and is a lengthy business, which gave one plenty of time. One local characteristic of the service is the insertion into the *אָכֵנוּ מִלַּכְנוּ* of a prayer against *שְׂרִיפָה* (fire) as well as *מִנְפָּה* (plague). Fire is more dreaded than the plague. Zunz and Steinschneider bewail the conflagrations at Constantinople and Adrianople as the worst of the enemies to Jewish books, but Salonica has suffered even more, and the fire of 1890 devastated half the town. On Tuesday (September 27th) I again peregrinated it, book-hunting and taking notes. Bad luck was still my portion, the answer constantly repeated was, "we had books, but they were burnt."

#### THE TALMUD TORAH

The Talmud Torah is still in ruins, but the Baroness Hirsch has promised to give sixty thousand francs toward the cost of rebuilding in modern style, if the community will find the rest. The insurance companies had to pay fifteen thousand as their part of the loss, but there is still a heavy deficit. The Grand Rabbi, Carlo Allatini, the Modianos, Fernandez, Saïas, Misrachi, Auzolle, R. Jeuda Nehama, even the British Consul-General, Mr. Blount—everybody begged me to use my good offices with the Anglo-Jewish Association to get them to help. And really it seems a case where a slice of its School Construction Fund should

be available. After the Baroness' generosity, they must not ask anybody else in Paris.

But there is a humorous side to the question. It reminds one of the story of the Galician father who was so very depressed. "What is the matter?" asked his friend. "I have promised my daughter's young man a Nedan of five hundred gulden, and there are



THE TALMUD TORAH AT SALONICA

still two hundred and fifty I cannot find." "What nonsense! If you have promised five hundred, he won't expect more than two hundred and fifty, so you are all right with your two hundred and fifty." "Ah! but it is just that two hundred and fifty which I am wanting." . . . It is a dreadful pity that the Talmud Torah Building was destroyed. It was one of the most ancient and authentic in the community.

## INSCRIPTIONS AND MANUSCRIPTS

Two Hebrew inscriptions still remain *in situ* by the well of the courtyard which I managed to photograph. Two others have been removed to the Rabbi's house. One is of 1752 and the other of 1624. The last has special interest, because it commemorates Noah Cohen Ashkenazi. The following is a copy:

שנת ה'ש'פ"ד  
 גל ה' צדקתו ברה כחמה שבעתים  
 נח כהן אשכנזי זה פעמים  
 אשר שקל הכסף במאזנים  
 לבנות מגדל עז לשם שמים  
 ונמצא רמזו על קיר לתת לו פי שנים  
 לאות על אבן אחת שבעה עיניים

The sum total of my spoil from Salonica actually represents a negative value! There are three MSS., of which only one is oldish, but uninteresting—a fifteenth century doctor's *vade mecum*. The other two are quite modern—Scriptural expositions in passable Hebrew, by a Greek proselyte, Rabbi Abraham ha-Ger, about sixty years old, and the other, a similar work, politely forced upon me by the author's grandson. The printed works proved my pitfall. Dr. Berliner proclaimed, in the *Hebräische Bibliographie* some months ago, that he had two pages of a mysterious edition of the Talmud, which he had abstracted from a Salonica binding.

In the Cairo Genizah I found a large fragment of fifty pages of Berachoth of the same edition, and we laid the flattering unction to our souls that this was a Salonica *incunabulum*. Unfortunately, a complete copy of Baba Mezhiah has turned up of the same edition,



but with a title page. And now it appears that it was printed only in 1706. The printers boast that fresh letters were actually cut for this same edition, but it was really nothing to boast of, for the print is vile, and, indeed, so bad that a sympathizer to whom I had shown my fragment had hopefully suggested that it might turn out to be a unique specimen of Hebrew wood-block printing. But *magna est veritas*, and it is nearly three centuries too late.

#### THE DONMÉ

One historical fact about Salonica is interesting. When Sabbatai Zevi turned the heads of Oriental Jews and others in 1666, and created so much commotion that even Oldenburg, the founder of the Royal Society, wrote to Spinoza for his candid opinion about that *soi-disant* Messiah, the Salonica Jews caught the craze very badly, and a large number followed their hero in his conversion to Islam. They became Turks to outward show, and to this very day their descendants, of whom there are said to be two hundred and fifty families in the city, are known as Donmé, or converts. I saw them smoking outside their open shops on Saturday, but was assured that they were crypto-Jews, and practice all they can of Judaism at home. They do not marry with the Turks, by whom, indeed, they are viewed with much suspicion. I spoke to one of them in Hebrew, and he evidently understood, though he protested he was a Turk. Such an one had taught at the *Alliance* schools, and sent his sons there. And there is documentary evidence about their existence. There is a *Responsum* about them in the שו"ת of R. Joseph David, the Grand Rabbi who died in 1737, and

whose *בית דין* was published three years later. And there is another *Responsum* about them in the *דברי שמואל* published at Salonica in 1891, in which Rabbi Cobo's predecessor, R. Raphael Samuel Arditi, describes on page 240 how he adjudicated on a question put to him by *ג' כתות של בעלי אמונה*, "three bands of the faithful." The faithful, however, are otherwise known as heretics or *מנינים*, and I was positively assured that the late Rav meant by them none other than these extraordinary Donmé.

#### VOLO

The ill-wind that brought no direct boat for Athens enabled me to spend an hour at the Volo synagogue and school, to have a chat with R. Mosé Pesakh, its communal factotum, and steal a peep at the local Genizah. The synagogue, like the community, is only thirty years old, and its waste-paper basket is proportionally modern. I found there a Larissa Kethubah of 1851, fragments of an old Salonica Psalter (xx-cxlv), and a Sephardi prayer book, and in Ladino a History of France (!), and an address in honor of the late Dr. Mosé Allatini. Praise is also therein incidentally bestowed on those other two Salonica worthies, the Baron and Baroness Hirsch, portraits of whom, by the by, I saw in several poor homes at Salonica. From a grocer at Volo, I bought a Greek and Hebrew prayer book and Ethics (Aboth) printed in 1885 and 1886 at Corfu. Rabbi Mosé told me that there were about one hundred and fifty Jewish families at Volo, and about the same number at Larissa, though there had been twice as many before the Russo-Turkish war. Larissa Jews were being

molested by the hillmen of Epirus, out of revenge for their Turkish sympathies, but the Volo Jews were under no discomfort. Volo is a sea-port and has consuls, to which fact, indeed, it owed its immunity from all damage during the Turkish occupation.

## SMYRNA

The Home of Sabbatai Zevi — Young Israel — A Dramatic Performance — Magnesia — A Wonderful Manuscript — Bounar Bashi — Rhodes — Mersina.

### THE HOME OF SABBATAI ZEVI

THE earlier days of Succoth I spent at Smyrna. To school-boys it is known as the first of Homer's seven birthplaces, but to Oriental Jews it is famous as the birthplace of Sabbatai Zevi, the Zionist and false Messiah of two hundred years ago. His father and uncle died here in 1666, and the following was given me as their epitaphs. For obvious reasons, I did not copy them myself.

#### THE FATHER MORDECAI ZEVI

דבק בתורת אל ובמצותיו  
 ירא וסר מרע כל ימותיו  
 קדמו פניו צדקותיו  
 בגן עדן יחליץ עצמותיו  
 מצבת קבורת הישיש נבון ונעלה  
 כהר מרדכי צבי נ'ע'  
 נפטר יום ד' ה' לחורש  
 ניסן שנת ה' ת"יך

#### THE UNCLE ISAAC ZEVI

דבק בתורת אל ובמצותיו  
 ירא וסר מרע כל ימותיו  
 קדמו פניו צדקותיו  
 בגן עדן יחליץ עצמותיו  
 מצבת קבורת חכם ונכון נעלה  
 כ'מ'ה' יצחק צבי נ'ע'  
 נפטר יום ב' לחורש שבט  
 שנת ה' ת"יך

I was told that a local and contemporary Hebrew almanac had appeared with a rude wood-cut, showing Sabbatai Zevi seated on the throne of David (? Solomon) as king of Israel, but I was not able to find a copy!

There are four large and five minor synagogues

here. As a stranger I went to that of the אורחם first, and here I was fortunate enough to find the venerable Chief Rabbi, the Chacham Bashi, R. Abraham Pelago. He is a fine-looking man, with a long white beard, and his age is variously given as ninety, ninety-three, and ninety-five. His conversation is bright and animated—in Ladino by preference. But he talks Hebrew fluently, and has written eighteen books in that language, some of them in poetry. He offered me sweet-stuff made of quince, and some sort of Marzipan to eat and mastic to drink, and made me a present of the Machzor Romania. He could never hope to attain his father's quantity of bookmaking, for his father was still sixty books ahead, and "I am an old man now," he said. Apropos, he is not the first of what I may call the Archipelagos, for his father, R. Chaim Pelago, had been Arch-Rabbi before him. The natives naturally hold them both in the highest esteem, and tell a story about the father which surpasses that of Newton's dog Diamond. There was a great conflagration in Smyrna in 1822 (there have been several since), and in the fire R. Chaim lost fifty-four of his manuscript compositions. He did not despair, but re-wrote, and afterwards printed and published every one. I am bound to say that Rabbi Abraham is not responsible for this wonderful story. But there can be no doubt as to the fecundity of authorship in both. It was an impressive sight to see the old man mount the lofty Tebah when called to the Law, and afterwards bless the congregation at the conclusion of the service as they filed past him, young and old, kissing his hand, which he then laid on their head saying, חוק ברין. He was the last to leave the synagogue with his

נשאט אנטו כיר אז באנדאר  
 נמאנד אז שוועמאני הילן באק  
 הקאמא מראיש דר פו אפמאר  
 פו קער נמארין ראנד פו משר

פער זארה פונע פו באקט שארמ  
 ערשט ענדלונד אז דער קאק  
 ער מאכט נפיש דר פו אפמאר  
 לויט שווע מוסק פו שפירן נשטער



נעמאט ענדלונד אפ אפמאר  
 פו אינדלונד פונע אפמאר  
 (אין פונע פו הנגמא פונע)  
 פונע ענדלונד פו דר נשטער

פו אינדלונד פונע אפמאר  
 פונע אפמאר פונע אפמאר  
 פונע אפמאר פונע אפמאר  
 פונע אפמאר פונע אפמאר

מסל

[See page 174]

A JUDÆO-PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT

Meshareth, upon whose arm he leaned, walking with swift strides, but bowed with age. He looked like Irving's Cardinal Wolsey—his stature just as tall, his flowing robes quite as picturesque, his environment perhaps a little more "stagey."

#### YOUNG ISRAEL

The *Alliance* schools were, of course, having their vacation. They are ably directed by M. Arié. The buildings are very suitable, with plenty of air, and not too much light. The boys' school was once the Governor's Konak, the girls' was specially built for them. English is taught to the boys, but many of the leading citizens think that English would be useful to the girls. Two or three intelligent young men told me that they would like their sisters to be able to talk English. The British colony at Smyrna is a large and desirable one—perhaps a couple of thousand. Clerkships in English houses are freely given to *Alliance* pupils. French, or rather France, is now at a discount, by reason of the Dreyfus affair, but Young Israel is passionately devoted to England because it treats Jews so well. Other synagogues are "Portugal" and the "Great." The Yeshiboth, of which that of R. Hillel and of R. Hai Gagin seem the most important, are generally owned by individuals, usually the sons or descendants of Rabbis. The books are neither particularly old nor interesting. Liturgies are conspicuous by their absence, Responsa predominate. With a single exception, I met with unvarying courtesy, and was allowed to look at the books as much as I liked. The exception, I am sorry to say, turned out to be the most influential, or, anyhow, the most dreaded man in the

place. It was Levi Bechor, a septuagenarian, who got quite cross when I asked him to show me his manuscripts. He told me he had none, and would not show them if he had, because thirteen years ago an Englishman (?) had come to him, and after being right royally fed, had repaid his hospitality by walking off with two MSS. I pleaded that I was not responsible for that misdeed, but he was inexorable, although he did give me some sweets instead. Levi Bechor is by profession an astrologer, or fortune-teller. He is highly esteemed by the Turks and also, I am sorry to say, by our co-religionists. He charges two or three hundred francs a consultation, and has been summoned to Constantinople on business, and eagerly admitted into the Serails there. If anybody loses anything, Bechor is the detective who is expected to discover the thief, and I was told an extraordinary instance of his sagacity. A purse was lost containing money, and the servants rushed off to consult him. He didn't exactly find the purse, but he convinced everybody of his supernatural powers by declaring that it was a *red* purse that was stolen, and this was, indeed, the case. It's very unlucky he didn't take to me. I don't know what ill-luck is consequently in store. Perhaps a calamity could be averted if I could get for him a call to Scotland Yard.

#### A DRAMATIC PERFORMANCE

The (Salomon de) Rothschild Hospital is close to the *Alliance* schools. The women's side had been quite deserted the day before the Festival, but there were several men in the wards. One poor boy had hurt his leg by a fall, and undergone an operation. He was a



brave little fellow and hardly winced when the bandages were changed, though he was evidently in much pain. Another patient was in the last stage of consumption. On the Monday night an amateur dramatic performance took place in the courtyard of the hospital. The actors were ex-students of the *Alliance*, the piece, *La grammaire française*. The tickets were in Ladino—old Spanish in Hebrew letters. The following is a transliteration of my ticket into Latin characters: "No. 592—Representacion Teatral—Noche di Lunes, 17 Tishri—Al profito del Ospedal 'Rothschild'—Bilieto di Intrado—Presio Medio Medjid." The piece was funny, and not badly acted, but a deafening brass band made the intervals between the acts quite a torture, and one couldn't help thinking of the unhappy patient dying upstairs.

#### MAGNESIA

On the Monday I went to Magnesia, another famous city of antiquity. But neither a colossal statue of Cybele on Mount Sipylus, nor some wonderful prehistoric chambers (tombs?) cut in the solid rock a few miles off, could restore the illusions, which vanished as one bumped along in a Smyrna and Cassaba Railway carriage. There are about two thousand Jews in Magnesia—less than a tenth of the number in Smyrna—but the *Alliance* schools are excellent. The boys' school was built *ad hoc*, the girls' used to be the house of the Greek Archbishop, and is therefore grander but, perhaps, a little less practical. In one of the rooms they are taught to make Smyrna carpets. These used formerly to be made only in the interior and by Turkish women. Jewesses had no means of

earning money, except the unsatisfactory one of assisting to gather in the grape and tobacco crops. The local Jews are delighted with this sensible innovation, and compete for the honor of sending their girls to the classes, but there is not room for a quarter of those who want to join. M. Alchalel showed me some of the carpets made in the school. They seemed admirable—all but one, into which a flashy European flower-pattern had been woven. A Smyrniote carpet merchant, M. Habib, the President of the Consistoire, or Communal Council, has contracted to purchase at market price all they can manufacture. The Consistoire, by the by, is a representative institution, elected by ninety-six electors, ten chosen by each synagogue and six by the Rabbis of Smyrna.

#### A WONDERFUL MANUSCRIPT

Magnesia has two synagogues—one about sixty and the other twenty years old. In the latter are preserved two massive volumes of a Massoretic Pentateuch written at Barcelona in 1289 by the son of Reuben, the son of Todros (Theodore), for Zerachia ben Sheshet ben Zerachia. The old covers have been replaced by new ones of olive wood, and the margins have been thickly gilded. The writing is magnificent and the letters two centimetres long. I did my best to photograph a couple of pages. There is also a volume of the Prophets and Hagiographa in a different hand. These were probably brought to Asia Minor by Jewish refugees from Spain. But their local history is by no means so commonplace. It tells how that one day, many, many years ago, the River Hermus overflowed its banks, and the anxious by-standers noticed a huge

and ancient coffin floating down the stream. They tried to catch hold, but it eluded their grasp. Then the Greeks or Christians tried in their turn. Again in vain. At last the Jews were called, and they brought it to shore and landed it without the slightest difficulty. The coffin was opened and found to contain a skeleton and four volumes in characters which none could read but the Jews. The Turks gave the books to them, but kept the skeleton, which they buried with due solemnity in the Urum Jami, once a Basilike, but now a Mosque, at Magnesia. In the dead of night the Rabbi saw a vision, and, behold, the man appeared that had been thus honored, and declared that he had been no Turkish saint, but a pious Jew, and begged his body might be removed from unhallowed ground. Next night the Jews by stealth disinterred the stranger's bones and reburied them in their own God's-acre. And to this day that grave in Urum Jami is empty, though the Ishmaelites know it not. Anyhow the Jews had the four volumes, though one was taken away one night by a mysterious Ashkenazi, who had studied it day after day until the fatal evening when it and he both vanished. The cemeteries are certainly ancient, but though we dug there for some hours we were unable to find any Genizoth.

#### BOUNAR BASHI

On the Tuesday I went to Bounar Bashi (= Water Plenty), at the foot of the hills, a couple of hours' drive from Smyrna. Here there is a small number of Jews with a little synagogue and a Yeshibah, with a large collection of books formed by Hali Judah

Amado. His great grandson sold me about a dozen manuscripts, so that I didn't have my drive for nothing. I could not hear of any other Hebrew MSS., except a fragment of the "Tachkemoni" much damaged by fire and water, and a parchment "Guide of the Perplexed." The Greek Orthodox College, called Evangelical, possesses a museum in which there is a fine illustrated Greek MS. of the Septuagint to the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets with the Catena, probably of the eleventh century. There are two or three pictures on each folio—some of them very realistic. The forbidden birds are all pictorially represented, and the stoning of Achan is ghastly but instructive. The book belonged (?) to an Archbishop and was probably once in the monastery at Mount Athos. I also heard of some Abyssinian theological writings, which had been offered to the British Museum, but not been accepted.

#### RHODES

On the 5th of October I was at Rhodes (רודוס). In the city of that name, there are three thousand five hundred Jews, two synagogues, and five Chevroth, but no school. The community is very anxious that one should be established, and the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* has been in treaty with them on the subject, but so far without practical result. The oldest synagogue dates from the times of the Knights, or Chevaliers, and is about three hundred and fifty years old. Its shape is something like that of the ancient Toledo synagogue. There are three parallel aisles divided off by a double arch. In the centre aisle is a very high Tebah extending half-way across, and opposite it is the Ark let into the wall. To the ex-

treme left is a fourth aisle, separated from the main building by five latticed windows, and constituting a women's synagogue on the ground floor. This apparently failed to furnish sufficient accommodation for the fair sex (very fair, by the way, in Rhodes), and so a modern gallery has been recently added at the western end. The roof is flat, supported by a great many oak rafters black with age, the floor is a neat mosaic of black and white pebbles, and there is a skylight over the Tebah, raised a little so as to compensate for the elevation of the platform. The official head of the community is the Chacham Bashi, R. Moses France, but the acting head and Ab Beth Din is R. Moses Israel, the only instance, outside Russia, that I know of where the "Crown Rabbi" does not officiate *de facto*. The people are all clean and good-looking, and so are their streets. Black and white mosaics, by way of flooring, seem very common, and remind one of the space in front of the coastguards' cottages on the cliffs in England. As in Smyrna, all the Jews seemed to have Tabernacles of their own, erected in yard or on balcony, out of the slightest wooden framework, covered with white sheeting, roofed by bulrushes and myrtle branches, and sometimes decorated with paper garlands. No books to speak of in Rhodes—a couple of Yeshiboth—a little MS. Hebrew Bible, unpunctuated, belonging to M. Bohaz Ménaché, *Membre à la cour d'appel du Vilayet de l'Archipel*.

## MERSINA

A few hours later the good ship "Venus" brought us on to Mersina, where Jewish people seem distinguished by their absence. There is just a Minyan,

no Shochet, but a Succah. Men come here without their wives and children, and eat no meat until they get home again. Pompeiopolis, out of the stones of which Mersina is built, doubtless contained more of our co-religionists. M. Cattegno, of Salonica, said that land was cheap, and cotton and wool and silk most plentiful, and he maintained that Asia Minor in general and Mersina in particular were better worth colonizing than the Argentine. And yet even at Konieh, the terminus of the great railway to Constantinople, there are no Jews, at Adana only one—the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce—and at Alexandretta only fifteen families.

Alexandretta is the starting point of the caravan route for Aleppo, where there are at least ten thousand Jews and sundry “boutons.”

## ALEPPO

Situation—The Ghetto—The Aleppo Codex—The Genizah—Aleppo in the Middle Ages—Schools—A Lucky Find.

### SITUATION

ALEPPO (in Arabic Haleb, in Hebrew חליפו or חלב, but generally צובה or ארם צובה, Aram Zobah, or Zobah alone, or abbreviated אר"ץ) can boast one of the most ancient Jewish communities. It is mentioned in the sixtieth Psalm, and though ten days' journey north of Damascus (see Ebn Haukal, the Arabian geographer of the tenth century, edit. Ouseley, p. 49) is traditionally regarded as the most northerly point to which a Palestinian Jew might journey without being regarded as a traveller. In marriage contracts (כתובות) made in the Holy Land, it is still stipulated that the husband should give his wife a conditional divorce, which comes into operation if he journeys to foreign parts. The southern limit outside which the Get commences to operate is Alexandria, the northern, Aleppo. This provisional divorce was a device intended to protect the wife from everlasting widowhood in case the adventurous husband did not return and was not heard of. Quite recently, the great Arctic explorer Nordjensköld resorted to the same expedient with regard to the wife he left behind him. The Jewish Law will not "presume" death in the case of an absent husband, however many years he may have been missing.

I chose the shortest way to Aleppo. This starts

from the port of Alexandretta (Scanderun), where there is a bare Minyan of Jews, and proceeds by way of the picturesque pass of Beilan (Pylae Syriacae). The road climbs, skirts the lake of Antioch, and crosses a weary waste of ancient ruins. This bridlepath is fifty miles nearer than the modern coach road, but is terribly wearisome and lonely. Carriages from Alexandretta take two to three days and nights to reach Aleppo.

Aleppo is a walled city of much commercial importance on the road to Bagdad and Southern Persia. In Shakespeare's time, however, its importance was enhanced by the fact that it lay on the great trade route to India. Commerce is still the ground of its attractiveness to the Jew, who, despite the Aleppo boil and other discomforts, has always affected it at the cost of being despised by his more literary co-religionists of Damascus and Bagdad.

#### THE GHETTO

The Jews of Aleppo still live in a quarter of their own, very much like an Italian ghetto, divided from the rest of the city by a gate, close to which there is an inscription in Hebrew dated **אָתֶרֶס** Ab, i. e., 1349. The chief synagogue is very ancient and has many peculiarities. There are several modern additions to it, but the main structure is dated by the Abbé Chagnot as early as the fourth century. It has several inscriptions, some carved on its walls, others painted on them. One is as late as 1861, another as early as 834. The latter is on a chapel stated to have been erected by Mar Ali ben Nathan b. Mebasser b. **הָאִרִם**. The following is a copy of the inscription:—



זה הקבה בנה מר  
 עלי בר נתן בר  
 מבשר בר הארם  
 מיגיעו וממונו ש  
 תהלך צדקה לשט.

Only four letters are starred, so that the date is probably 1145, sel. = 834. The local Jews, however, assume that all the letters count in the פריט, but that



SYNAGOGUE AT ALEPPO

no thousand is omitted, so that the date would be 654 sel., i. e., 345 of the common era! The letters are certainly very archaic, but, *pace* the Abbé Chagnot, so early an inscription should not be accepted as such without further evidence. There are several similar chapels surrounding the main building, evidently added from time to time, as the community grew. In each of these Minyan is separately held. A like arrangement exists in Bokhara, and traces of it still survive in the ancient Roman ghetto. The chief pe-

culiarity of the Aleppo synagogue is a raised pulpit called the *הכנסה אליה* approached by a flight of some twenty steps and still used for the solemnization of a B'rith Milah.

### THE ALEPPO CODEX

Of chief literary interest is a chapel to the extreme west behind the *ארון הקודש* with a stone sarcophagus and a vaulted roof. Local tradition has it that here the apparition of Elijah the Prophet had been seen, and it had saved the community during one of its numerous persecutions. In this damp shrine the famous Massoretic Codex, the pride of the Aleppo Jews, is reverently preserved. This is the so-called Codex of Aaron (Abu Said) ben Asher, supposed to have been written about 980. Dr. Wickes in his treatise on the accentuation of the twenty-one so-called prose Books of the Old Testament (Oxford, 1887) gives a facsimile of one of its pages, and proves that it was not written before the eleventh century. Dr. Ginsburg, however, in his Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (London 1897), ignores this scepticism, and quotes the colophons given in the *אבן ספיר* and *הצופה חז* (numbers 47 and 48, Lyck, 1857). I examined the MS. carefully and have come to the conclusion that Wickes and Neubauer and other scholars are right and that it is only a copy of the original codex of Aaron ben Asher two or three centuries later.<sup>1</sup> The following are two other colophons in the MS. which are not quoted by any authority. I copied them because they throw

<sup>1</sup> See Neubauer, *Studia Biblica*, III, 24. *Révue des Etudes Juives*, XV, 316, and Ginsburg, *op. cit.* p. 242.

light on the problem how the MS. left the Karaites and became the property of the Rabbanite Jews of Jerusalem.

(a) קדש לה' על ישראל הרבנים השכנים בעיר הקדש

לא ימכר ולא יגאל לעולם ולעולמי עולמים

(b) קדש לה' על בעלי התלמוד השכנים בעיר הקדש

But this is not the only codex of which the Aleppo Jews can boast. In the same place is a beautifully illuminated Pentateuch in two columns written very large with the Haftarothe and Megillothe. Unfortunately it is much damaged by damp. Then there is another Massoretic Pentateuch with a colophon, *קדש כה"ר אברהם רקיש כהן בכיר יצחק כהן*. But the gem of the collection is a fourth MS., also a Pentateuch, with the Hebrew Text and Targum written in alternate verses. It contains very copious Massoretic lists both at the beginning and the end. The colophon states that it was finished on the 15th Tammuz, 5101, i. e., 1341. There is a note beginning *שמעתי מה"ר אברהם מרומא*, "I heard from Rabbi Abraham of Rome etc.," which points to an Italian scribe.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE GENIZAH

Over the synagogue there is a Yeshibah, and, in a secret chamber in the eaves of the roof of one of the side chapels is the Genizah. This was as full of dust as the famous one at Fostat, but much less interesting or ancient. Almost all I found there was printed matter, and of this the most curious was the *Supplément au Journal hébreu le Libanon* of

<sup>2</sup> See Kaufmann, Memorial Volume, p. 131.

the 11th January, 1869, being an account in Hebrew of the annual meeting of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, at which M. Joseph Halévi gave the story of his famous mission to the Falashas. The Genizah is periodically emptied, and its contents are taken solemnly to the Jewish cemetery. Their burial is supposed to induce a downfall of rain.

Generally speaking, there are few MSS. of importance left in Aleppo. There is a *מסורה* or *כתר* (Masoretic Bible) finished in Kislew, 1307, belonging to M. Jarchi. But quite interesting is a reference to Cochin China in a manuscript of the *ספר הקנה*. The book itself was hardly worth buying. This is the colophon:—

נעתק זה הספר להנכבד ר' שמואל בן בכור ר' הלל תנצבה השם  
יזכהו אמן ונשלם . . . בערב שבת בין הערבים בשמונה ימים לחדש  
אב שנת הרנ"ו במדינת סינים חרתא דיעל כ"ף יבא רבא כותבא אני  
הכותב אברהם הספרדי בר' משה נע' פריץ.

Samuel b. Hillel, for whom the book was written in 1497, seems to have been one of the first of the Syrian Jews to migrate to Cochin China. He thus establishes the fact that the Jews of Malabar and Aleppo have been in close relation for more than four centuries. Wessely in his edition of Abraham Farissol's *ארחות עולם* publishes, as an appendix, a letter by Ezekiel Rachabi to Tobias Boas, telling how his father came to Cochin in 1646. Aleppo, being on the trade routes between Europe and Asia, was equally familiar with India and Italy. In Italy many of its Hebrew books were published, notably the Ritual of the Aleppo Jews, recently described by Dr. Berliner in his *Aus meiner Bibliothek*, but which I sought in vain in Aleppo itself.

## ALEPPO IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The traveller Benjamin of Tudela visited Aleppo in 1173, and Alcharisi about fifty years later. The former calls the citadel the Palace of King Nouredin, and says that, at the time of his visit, there were fifteen hundred Jewish inhabitants, of whom the chief were R. Moses el Costandini, R. Israel, and a R. Seth. The witty author of the "Tachkemoni" has much to say in praise of the Jews of Aleppo in Makamat 17, 47, 50, and especially 46. He calls it "the royal City, Aleppo the blest."

In his day, the leading Jew was Joseph Maghrabi Ibn Aknin, who in 1195 migrated from Europe by way of Egypt, where he became the friend of Maimonides, who wrote for him the "Moreh Nebuchim." Other men of light and leading were Azariah, and his brother Samuel, R. Nissim, the King's Physician Eleazer, Jeshua, Jachim Hananiah, and Joseph ben Hisdei, and many others. Of Aleppo poets, of whom he mentions Moses, Daniel, and Joseph, Alcharisi thought very little. The best was R. Joseph b. Zemach, who had good qualities but made bad verses. Their piety must have been extreme, for Eleazer is held up to scorn for having once travelled on the Sabbath, although it was at the king's command. In 1401, as appears from notes in contemporary MSS. in the Bodleian library, the Jewish quarter was pillaged, with the rest of the city, by Tamerlane; and a Jewish saint died there after fasting seven months! In the sixteenth century, Samuel Laniado b. Abraham, and in the seventeenth, Chaim Cohen b. Abraham were repre-

sentative authors. The "Mekor Chajim" of the latter was published at Constantinople in 1649 and at Amsterdam, by the famous Manasseh ben Israel, in 1650. Other Aleppo worthies are Isaac Lopes in 1690, Isaac Berachah in the eighteenth century, and Isaac Athia about 1810.

### SCHOOLS

It is estimated that the present number of Jews is ten thousand, each of whom has to pay a poll tax collected by the communal chiefs. Besides various primary schools (תלמוד תורה), where only Hebrew and Arabic are taught, there is a boys' school founded by the *Alliance Israélite* in 1869 with two hundred and fifty pupils, of whom ninety-six pay, and a girls' school founded in 1889 with one hundred and ninety-five pupils, seventy-nine of whom pay. The costume of the Jewess resembles that of the natives, and is a long black cloak in which she is shrouded from head to foot, but she does not cover her face with a gauze veil like her Mohammedan sister. Her moral character stands high, but there was a troupe of singing girls from Damascus in the city, and some of these were Jewesses. One was a great favorite with the young people, whose enthusiastic shouts of *Kamane, Tera!* (*Encore, Esther!*) gave voice to their appreciation of her histrionic gifts. The girls at the *Alliance* school wear European dress. The Chief Rabbi Abraham Chalonei was degraded by the local Pasha in 1896, and replaced by a Vakil (substitute) Chacham Bashi, Salomon Safdieh. A Hebrew printing

press has existed for a few years in Aleppo, and I possess the rules of the Jewish Friendly Society, צדקה ומרפה, printed there in red letters in 1898. Everybody, and especially Raphael Silvera, treated me with much kindness, and I was sorry to leave them after only three days' stay. I confess to feeling some emotion when my hosts applied to me the ritual of the departing traveller. It was a pretty God-speed with which I was conducted forth from the city. Psalm cxxi was solemnly recited as a dialogue between the citizens and their departing guest. "The Lord shall guard thy going out and thy coming in," was a sufficiently comforting message, and yet I felt as though I were officiating at my own funeral.

#### A LUCKY FIND

I felt the keenest disappointment at the poor results achieved after a systematic search for literary treasure in what—from a distance—seemed so rich a quarry. I had delved and groped in the recesses of the huge Genizah of the oldest and one of the largest synagogues now existing, but though the dust was more acrid, and the work far dirtier than that of Fostat, the matrix was modern, and the dirt not pay dirt. I left the ancient city discouraged and disgusted, but just as I reached the gate, a poor man hurried up with a bundle of pages which he offered me. I did not want to take it, but by way of polite negative offered him half a mejidieh. "It is yours," he cried, and passed me the bundle, which I accepted without enthusiasm, though with a sort of idea that it might serve as *Reiseliteratur*.

When, however, I came to examine it, I found that it was a veritable treasure-trove—better than anything I had voluntarily acquired. It turned out to be the unknown Divan, or rather a very large fragment of the Divan, composed by Elazar ha-Babli, an Eastern poet, probably of Bagdad, who was on terms of intimacy with the son of Maimonides and most of the other Hebrew worthies of his time.



## THE SCHOOLS AT TETUAN

DURING a short visit to Morocco, in 1894, I had an opportunity of seeing and admiring the girls' and boys' schools of the *Alliance Israélite* at Tetuan. Notwithstanding the coincidence of Ramadán and Easter, which at Tangiers had been utilized to make a Jewish holiday, the schools were at work, and the pupils were busily and happily employed. The school buildings are well suited for their purpose, but essentially foreign to their environment. Instead of their native marble and brilliant azulejo tiles, the Tetuanese are here taught to admire the bricks and mortar of Marseilles. The building, I was told, was built by the French, and bodily imported from France, at a cost of eighty-thousand francs, although a third of that sum would probably have sufficed to adapt a Moorish palace to the requirements of a modern school-house. That such a model is by no means unsuitable is proved by the English school at Tangiers, which, with its open galleries on the upper floors round the centre atrium into which the school-rooms open, is more artistic but not less convenient than the most modern of London school buildings.

Such as it is, however, the boys' school at Tetuan is without question practically built. There is only one story; eight class rooms occupy two sides of a central courtyard planted with lime trees; lavatories take up a third side, and a library and the head-master's office and entrance occupy the fourth side. There is

a similar quadrangle for the girls, similarly planned out, and, of course, with a separate entrance, giving on the main and many-arched lane of the Mellah in which the Jews are locked up night and day. The head-mistress is Mdle. Ben Simul, who, like one of her subordinates, has been well trained at the Ecole Bischoffsheim in Paris. The Director of the boys is M. Nissim Levy, who has occupied his post for about two years. He has six masters under him and three hundred and fifty-six boys, of whom one hundred and seventy-six, or just about half, pay school fees. Among the pupils are two Catholics and one Arab. Except in the lowest class the Spanish jargon, which is the vernacular of most of the Moorish Jews, is not spoken. French and Hebrew are the only languages taught. The circulating library, which for contents is beyond praise, cannot boast a single English book, not even a dictionary, but there are translations, into French, of Quentin Durward, and Kompert's Ghetto Stories, and Graetz's History of the Jews. The pupils are admirable French scholars, the only mistake they made in a somewhat difficult piece of dictation was a superfluous "s" in "leur." But it is questionable whether an English master would not be of advantage to the school. As it is, the only outlets for the Jewish emigrant from Tetuan are Algiers and Spanish South America. If the boys had a little knowledge of English, Egypt might provide a fresh field for their energies and ambitions. With the Hebrew instruction, which includes Rashi and Dinim, I was specially pleased. This is the less surprising, seeing that Tetuan is the seat of the Chief Moorish Rabbi, to whom the Jews of all Morocco and

even of Gibraltar appeal on questions of doctrine and dogma and ritual.



SPANISH COSTUMES OF JEWESSES IN ALGIERS

The girls' school comprises two hundred and eighty pupils, of whom only ninety-five can afford to pay. Three of them are Catholics, but there is, of course, no

Mohammedan little girl. Here, too, French is the language of authority, but I must confess to having been more interested in the class for dressmaking, where I saw a smart-looking Paris frock being built, in primary colors, for a Jewish bride. I sighed for the artistic draperies which our *émigrées* had brought over to Tangiers from Castile, but admired the furbelows of this century and the eagerness with which they were being adopted by our dark young sisters in 1894. The Anglo-Jewish Association and the London Council of the Morocco Relief Fund give this girls' school an annual subvention, and the money is well bestowed. English is less necessary for the girls than for the boys, but several of our co-religionists in Gibraltar have married their cousins on the other side of the Straits. The Tetuan schools were founded as early as 1862, and have for many years contributed more than their share of teachers to the various schools of the *Alliance Israélite*. They together cost only fifteen thousand francs per annum.

## PERSIAN JEWS

Petrovsk — A Synagogue — Jewesses — Travelling in the Caucasus — Across the Caspian to Persia — Achalcig Jews — A Persian Gehazi — From Reshd to Teheran — The Maale Yehudiya — The Great Synagogue — Medical Practice — Sialkal — The Sadr e Aâzam — Jewish Disabilities — Notables.

### PETROVSK

FROM the Black Sea to Calcutta, from Bagdad to Kai-fong-foo, we meet with Persian Jews, that is to say, Persian in the sense that we in Europe are "German." They worship, or used to worship, in the Persian Rite; they speak Persian; they transliterate Persian into Hebrew characters; they have a Hebrew-Persian literature; and they hold a vague sort of tradition that they are descended from Persian ancestry.

Their Hebrew-Persian literature, however, is almost unknown, and as late as October, 1895, the learned Dr. Neubauer, with all his scholarly accuracy, could write only in a tentative sort of way: "It is certain that the Persian Jews had a ritual and literature of their own, which we at present know only through a few MSS. of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the British Museum, and in the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg."<sup>1</sup> Bible manuscripts apart, there are, in all

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Neubauer's article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, viii., 139, on the "Jews in China." The same authority, in his monumental Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian, wrote in 1886, apropos of facsimiles, that "nearly all branches of writing are represented except the Persian square characters, of which the British Museum only possesses a single MS. of a late date written at Qum."

three together, barely a dozen volumes of such MSS. Dr. Neubauer's remark, made as it was apropos of those mysteries of civilization, the Chinese Jews, was especially startling because of its reminding us that the Jews of Persia were almost as great a mystery to us as their lost brethren of the far East. And yet they are so near that in something less than six weeks, and in two successive summer vacations, I have been able to visit them in their old-world homes of Teheran, and Samarkand, and Bokhara, and bring away a hundred manuscripts and more to fill up a gap in our literature, or at least in our libraries.

The roads to Turkestan and Persia do not diverge till one reaches the Caspian Sea. There are two great ports of embarkation, Baku, the City of Fire, and Petrovsk. Each is the terminus of a great line of railway. Baku ends the Transcaucasian Railway, which begins at Batoum and is only about a thousand miles long. Petrovsk has in the last two years become the end of the great trunk line of Russia three thousand versts further than Moscow. From Calais to Petrovsk takes about seven days. One travels overland throughout, and in Europe all the time. Only for a few hours in the last day does one get a distant glimpse of the great peaks of the Caucasus, rising out of the dead flat of the steppe. The rest is monotony exemplified.

Petrovsk itself is deadly dull. But the railway and the great oil discoveries at Grosni, a few hours off, have made it quite important as a commercial centre. Of course, where commerce is, our co-religionists are not far to seek. And so, though Petrovsk is many days' journey from the Pale of Jewish Settle-

ment, several Russian and Polish Jews are to be found there, all specially favored and graciously permitted to try to make a living in the new town. I must confess to some degree of trepidation in daring to ask after Jews in Holy Russia. I did so with bated breath and whispering humbleness. Most of the people I asked did not, or could not, tell me. At last I was directed to a shop which was closed, for it was Saturday. The shopkeeper did turn out to be a Jew, and with plentiful gesture, and language more voluble than intelligible, showed me the way to a little shed near the Bazaar, in the old town, where the Ashkenazi Jews were going to pray. Disappointed at finding a number of brethren in no way different from those to be met within hearing of Bow Bells, I asked in Yiddish whether there were no "Gorski Evraei" or "Achal-cig Juden" in the place. "O yes," they said, "they are the oldest inhabitants, but we do not pray with them."

#### A SYNAGOGUE

After much persuasion an ancient congregant, short of stature, blear-eyed, and coated to the heels, undertook to escort me part of the way to the Shool of the "Gorski Evraei." *En route* he told me that his own synagogue had been burnt down some months previously, and they had nearly finished building a new one, and that the shed where I had found him was only a temporary house of prayer. He would not go all the way with me, but hurried back as soon as the Persian Shool was in sight. This turned out to be a small brick building, four-square and detached, with the Chazan's house and a courtyard adjoining. It

was a sort of miniature Bevis Marks, and about a hundred years old. The interior was bright enough—the walls were washed a light blue, a circular Almemar occupied the middle of the building. There were windows on ~~three~~ sides—one commanded the street and approach to the synagogue, another the mountains and the sea, and the third curtained off and concealed the dozen ladies or so who prayed in the adjoining passage. The fourth, or western side, was occupied by the Ark, which was festooned in green and surmounted by a crown, heraldically displayed over a shield with stag and unicorn by way of supporters. In the centre of the shield was its dedicatory prayer in memory of a lost son who had died in childhood. Eastern synagogues are full of such memorials. One such, an inscription carved in wood, is still to be seen in the ancient "Genizah" Synagogue at Cairo. The rest of the synagogue furniture consisted of very low benches with movable upright desks by way of lectern for each worshipper. The Shool door was, unnecessarily, protected by a Mezuzah, and on the walls hung a Russian and Hebrew calendar and a *Verzeichniss* of the holy places in Palestine, printed, alas, in Germany or for German use.

#### JEWESSES

The congregation was distinctly picturesque. The dozen ladies who prayed in the passage adjoining supplied a good deal of local color. But their decorum was unimpeachable, for to avoid distracting the attention or even attracting the notice of worshippers of a sterner sex, they arrived after the men were all in



synagogue and left before service was over. And yet as they left the building, I noticed through window No. 1 many a fair Circassian looking backward even as their mother Eve on leaving Paradise. About fifty men were present. All wore the high black (or occasionally white) astrakhan fez, and half of them, especially the lads, were clad in the imposing national costume of the Caucasus, cartridges and all. They looked very neat and warlike with their long gray surtout, strapped tightly at the waist, a dozen cartridge pockets all in a row across the chest, and silver buckles and cartridge cases to add to the effect. They were all tall above the average, and their faces were distinctly pleasing. One or two of them might have stood for the model of Albrecht Dürer's portrait of himself, or masqueraded as bluff King Hal.

#### TRAVELLING IN THE CAUCASUS

The Caucasus is a very meeting ground of nations. Its predominating dialects are Armenian and Turkish, but the indigenous Jews talk Persian to one another, and few know any Russian. Here, as elsewhere, Hebrew had to serve as our common language, and we got along well enough to understand one another. They told me that they talked Persian because they were the descendants of the Tribes of Israel whom Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, had carried away captive and "placed in Halah and in Habor by the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (II Kings, xvii.). The real reason is more probably the fact that till about a century ago the whole of the Caspian coast was under Persian sway. But the tradition is widespread among the Persian Jews and in the Cau-

casus that there have been many independent Jewish tribes until quite recent years. I was told that in an Armenian monastery near Kutais ancient records are preserved which conclusively prove that Jews were paramount in the country three or four centuries ago. Some were converted to Christianity, but many have remained loyal to our ancient faith, and these are treated by the Russians almost as kindly as are the Karaites of the Black Sea. The Rabbi-Chazan, who seemed fairly intelligent, told me that he and his family and many of his flock were not natives of Petrovsk, but had come from Sura, a place in the hills about five hours' distance by "phaeton"—that ramshackle jolting car, which sounds so grand in English, but connotes so much discomfort in Russia. He said his people were poor, but were doing better since railway times. He introduced me to his only son, "the comforter," Menachem, as he was pathetically called, for all his brothers had died in childhood at Sura.

The service was conducted entirely by the Rabbi, the ritual was Sephardic, the prayer books were printed at Leghorn, Vienna, and Warsaw. Mitzvoth and עליית were auctioned as occasion arose. There were no Cohanim in the congregation, and I was called up both "Cohen" and "Levi." Two wardens, gloved in spotless white wool, held the Sepher, one on either side of the reading desk, but when the Reader reached the תוכחה (Deuteronomy xxviii. 15), the two silently disappeared from the Almemar, the Rabbi read the portion to himself in an awed voice, and at its close pronounced the full מי שברך for the whole congregation, which constitutes, as with us, part of the Sabbath ritual after יקום פורקן. Then the white gloves re-

sumed their office and the service proceeded, the *מי שברך* being repeated in its due place in the service. The pronunciation of Hebrew is half-way between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic. The Kametz is pronounced "o" and Cholem "oi," but the consonants are as pronounced by Portuguese Jews.

After service, a substantial looking burgher invited me to make Kiddush and break bread with him. The meal consisted of vodka, cucumbers, chilis, and fowl in rice. This was the Zakuska, then water was brought in for us to wash our hands, and *מוצא* was made over two big Challahs, which looked like huge prehistoric buns, very brown inside and out. Host, hostess, and children sat on the matted floor, but I was honored with a chair.

#### ACROSS THE CASPIAN TO PERSIA

The steamer from Petrovsk to Baku generally calls at Derbend. This is a place famous for its ancient Jewish colony, and was visited by Tschorni, who describes it in his *Travels in the Caucasus* (*ספר המסעות* (בארץ קוק)). I was not fortunate enough to be able to land and verify his remarks. But I have been in Baku three times, and spent several days there.

From the Jewish point of view, it is interesting quite apart from its mercantile aspects. In the immediate neighborhood is Ateshga, a famous Parsee Temple, where fire from the earth has been burning for twenty-five centuries. Naphtha springs are now the devout objects of pilgrimage to as many thousands of commercial travellers as to the Guebres, who used to come to pray at the sacred fire of Ateshga. Baku was taken from the Persians by Russia in 1806, and till

1872 the petroleum industry was a monopoly. In 1871 there was only a single drilled well in the whole Apsheron Peninsula; there are now several hundreds. In 1879 there were 15,604 inhabitants, principally Persians and Armenians. There are now a quarter of a million, of whom several thousand are Jews, although Baku remains nominally out of the Pale of Jewish Settlement. Several strata of Jews can be distinctly recognized, for they remain jealously and almost geologically apart. In the new—the business and uninteresting—quarter of the city, between the Docks and the Black Town, are the “Russian Jews,” with two synagogues, two Kosher restaurants, and several Chevrass. They do not invite comment, nor are they in any other respect inviting. Suffice it to say that most of them are materialistic and irreligious, without other ideal than money-getting, rapid, clever, unscrupulous. They have achieved their ideal and half the trade is in their hands. Many of them have purchased the favor of the powers that be, by submitting to baptism and becoming Orthodox. Some, not satisfied with a single conversion, have artfully doubled the process with a view to more effectual concealment of their origin. One man, the representative, alas, of a great Jewish house in Paris, became Roman Catholic first and then Greek Orthodox, and is doubly favored as being a “former Roman.”

In the upper town, among the narrow wynds which cluster round the ancient minaret of the Persian Mosque, is a colony of Persian Jews, some indigenous and some birds of passage, trading between Reshd and Baku. They have no MSS. and few printed books.

But their little learning suffices to make their Hebrew intelligible. They are poor but not discontented. Their Minhag is that of the Italian printed prayer book. But they enjoy the proud distinction of being regarded by the Russians as indigenous "Gorski Evraei," or Mountain Jews. Baku is their headquarters, and they have communities and synagogues not only here and in Petrovsk, Derbend, and Grosni, but also in Kuba and Bakuba. And in Baku these Persian Jews told me something really extraordinary. Privolni is a sea-coast village between Lenkoran and Astara on Russian soil, and the whole of its inhabitants have lately become נרי צרק, proselytes to Judaism, and the Russian authorities have not said them nay, nor even imposed any disabilities upon them!

#### ACHALCIG JEWS

The Achalcig Jews of Baku are Georgians and speak Armenian. Their wives and daughters are not bad-looking, but they hardly approach one's idealized anticipations of Circassian beauty. Their communities are to be found all through the Caucasus, at Tiflis the capital, at Schilvan, and Poti, and Kutais, but especially at Achalcig, their most ancient habitat, from which they derive their name. Kutais, near the Black Sea, is famous for an old monastery in which are said to be archaic records proving that the whole land around was at one time Jewish. In the synagogue there an ancient Massoretic Hebrew Bible is preserved with almost superstitious devotion.

The Achalcig Jews are good business men and keen travellers. One young man, Daniel Raphael

Manoah, from Kutais, boarded our train at Rostow, many days' distance from his home, and sold us silk shawls with a charmingly naïve insistence that would not be denied. The shawls were a great success as presents, and, from the pecuniary point of view, I must have made an excellent bargain with Manoah.

#### A PERSIAN GEHAZI

The mail steamer from Baku to Enzeli, the Persian port, from which Teheran is usually approached, takes about a day and a half and runs once a week in the summer and fortnightly in the winter. We just missed the boat, and, as the season was on the turn, could not risk waiting for a doubtful next, so we looked about for a cargo vessel. At last we heard of a little launch called the "Nena," belonging to a Persian merchant Aschurowa, and manned and officered by Persians. The ship agent warned us not to pay anything, for that we would be carried *pour nos beaux yeux*. But when the time for departure arrived, the wily owner who had relieved us of our passports, in dumb show suggested that he would like sleeve-links of foreign coin as a souvenir. We tried to pacify him with Turkish shillings, he would have none of them. Nothing but English sovereigns would satisfy his æsthetic taste. We were entirely in his hands, and so, Gehazi-like, he had his will, and thus obliged us to pay twice as much, and take twice as long as ordinary passengers by the mail. The "Nena" had been condemned as unseaworthy two years before we set foot upon her. She was certainly most uncomfortable; we had to sleep on the open deck, and for eight days our only distraction was to watch

the captain at his devotions, giving orders while prostrate on his prayer carpet. No further ablutions were permitted us than the pouring of water on our fingers from out of the spout of a kettle, and I got into serious trouble with the captain for venturing to sully a fire bucket full of sea water by the addition of a little soap. The passengers lay higgledy-piggledy before the mast.

We stopped at Astara and Lenkoran, and on the third day reached Enzeli. We were rowed up the lagoon by ten sturdy oarsmen for a couple of hours, and then reached Peri Bazaar, where the long ride begins which takes the traveller in four or five, and sometimes fourteen days to Teheran, by way of Reshd and Kazvin.

#### FROM RESHD TO TEHERAN

By this short route Teheran can be reached in twelve days from London, if one is very lucky and manages to catch everything, fevers excepted. It means some days' riding "Chapar," changing horses two or three times a day. With our own horses, and the postboy's and an Armenian servant's and the luggage horse, we formed quite a picturesque caravan. But we were ever so much more picturesque than comfortable. As the Japanese Colonel, Y. Fukushima, said: "A 'Chapar' pony may have three, two, one, or no feet, but never four." The agony of its amble, after an inexperienced rider has been bumped on a Persian saddle for a dozen hours or so, surpasses belief. The only thing that supported one (the horses didn't) was the hope that some day *meminisse juvabit*. Well, the reminiscence, though

not tender, is at least painless, and the scenery on either side of the mountain pass which divides Reshd from Kazvin will certainly not be easily forgotten.

From Kazvin to the capital there is a wide road upon which carriages do—and with prudence can—drive. The coachman has to look out for holes, some of which are large enough to swallow up a four-in-hand. We were fortunate in that His Excellency the Saâd-es-Sultaneh, the “Arm of the Kingdom,” Governor of Kazvin and Postmaster General of Northern Persia, was good enough, for a consideration, to let us have his own landau and four horses. His Excellency, whose Palace of Petunias is the show place of Kazvin, was literally our Persian Cook, for, not only did he serve as Tourist Agent to Teheran, but he had accompanied his Imperial Master, the late Shah, in his memorable visit to Europe, in the humble capacity of cook! His magnificent equipage, however, managed to bring us to the capital in fourteen hours, so that we arrived at break of day.

#### THE MAALE YEHUDIYA

Hardly allowing me time for a preliminary and unsatisfactory wash, a Persian nondescript in a uniform, half policeman, half soldier, and three-quarters beggar, took me to the Maale Yehudiya, or Jewish quarter, where he left me in charge of a Jewish lad. The small boy, wide-eyed with curiosity, escorted me through the intricacies of the quarter, from courtyard to courtyard, through many a gate, and past numbers of timid and suspicious Jewesses, till he brought me to the Synagogue of Ezra Cohen Zedek.

There are only about four thousand Jews in Tehe-



ran, but there are fourteen synagogues, and every male Jew is a regular attendant at public worship in the early morning. It was not yet seven o'clock, but I found the congregants on the point of removing their Tallith and Tephillin. However, the will I had shown to join their service was taken for the deed, and I was thus better accredited than if I had had a thousand



JEWISH SCHOOL AT TEHERAN

introductions. They took me round to the Rabbi and other notables, and every day for seven days we spent much time in the quarter. We took the photograph one day when we were visiting the Talmud Torah School, which meets in the open air on a platform running parallel with the right-hand side of the synagogue and immediately outside. The Melammed,

the old man with the beard leaning against the pillar to the left, was seated cross-legged on the ground with a very long bamboo cane in one hand, while with the other he occasionally pulled the ropes of a hammock cradle slung across the end of the platform, and rocked its plump and dusky little occupant to slumbers, which the cane prevented its naughty brothers from sharing.

The teacher, despite his weapon of authority, was all sweetness and light to his Feringhee visitors, and scrupled not to allow some of his pupils to seat themselves on the synagogue floor in the attitude of prayer, and himself sat himself amongst them, and boldly and seriously faced the camera. We hitched up the curtain to show the alcoves in which the Scrolls are placed. The picture also gives an idea of the narrow ladies' gallery on the left, the Oriental rugs on the floor, the movable wooden reading desk, and the characteristic round wooden cases, cloaked in Oriental embroideries, in which stand the Siphre Torah.

#### THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE

The next illustration depicts another synagogue, the Great, which has at least some architectural pretensions. Beneath the floor there is a fascinating Genizah, damp and funereal. You raise a flagstone and lower yourself by the hands till your feet light on the crumbling and mouldy remains of the Hebrew wastepaper of a Persian century. What one finds there is neither old nor interesting, but then one shouldn't expect too much from even "a cycle of Cathay." The pillars are curiously grooved, the three figures seated on the step of the Almemar are typical Persian Jews, and the

Hebrew inscriptions over the alcoves are interesting. They represent the well-known text:—

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors!



THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE AT TEHRAN

Though the oldest of the Teheran synagogues, the Great cannot boast its century. The whole community is barely one hundred and fifty years old. The names of the Jews one meets reveal their origin from the ancient communities in the South. Such are

Kashani, Hamadani Yazdi, Isfahni, Dardashti. I came across only one Teherani, David Michael Teherani, the Banker, and he, like most bankers, was probably a *novus homo*. And yet Rhea, the ruins of which are within an hour's ride from the capital, is the ancient Rages, one of the chief cities of Media, and the home of the kinsman of Tobit, that exemplar of the old man of antiquity, the good father of a good son. Tobits are not common among the Jews in Persia nowadays, but they are still to be found even in *fin de siècle* Teheran. Such an one, Dr. Rosen of the German Legation there told me is his Hebrew teacher, the brother of Aga Meir Hamadani, of the Caravan-serai Amir, a man of high ideals, and utterly unworldly. Such an one, too, is the old physician, Nour Mahmoud Hakim, as the natives affectionately call him, but whom his brethren know as Rabbi Nahurai.

#### MEDICAL PRACTICE

The Hakim is a keen, bright-eyed old man, with a snow-white beard. He looked the picture of Faust, or, perhaps, Maimonides himself, as he pored over some manuscript or other. Though an octogenarian, and a medico of quite the old school, his European colleagues of the most advanced type respect him as infinitely superior to the ordinary native Hakim. In fact they regard him as a mine of empirical knowledge, and even the Shah summoned him to his bedside. He possesses a fine little library of Persian, Arabic, and Hebrew manuscripts, mostly medical, and asked me to get him the Koran in Hebrew. His garden is a delightful storehouse of pomegranate, rose, and fig trees, and vines cluster round his courtyards.

The natives look up to him as something almost supernatural in his wisdom, and his sons shine by his borrowed light. They have the veneer of civilization upon them, for they spent six weeks in Paris, studying medicine as they told me, though the one was in bed nearly all the time, and his brother was overawed by the asphalt and the gas around him. One of them



SYNAGOGUE OF ASHER ROFÉ AT TEHERAN

allowed me to sit by his side one morning as he interviewed his patients. The sight was comical enough. He sat on the floor by the window in European garb, but with the high black Persian conical cap on his head. In front of him was a sort of chessboard with ointments and little phials. His doorkeeper brought the patients up to the window, and then ensued a whispered conversation which generally ended in the

patients' receiving a minute dose. To my uncultured eye it seemed that all the doses came from the same miraculous cruse, though evidently some were intended for internal application and others for external. Most of his *clientèle* were women, Shiite women, not Jewesses. They rarely unveiled, but it was funny to see a lean arm or a tiny tongue projecting from the Yashmak, and blindly seeking inspection!

Hakims are great men in Oriental communities, and it is not surprising to find synagogues dedicated to their memory. Such an one is that of Asher Rofé, the Dr. Asher of Teheran, of which I was able to get a photograph. The illustration may serve to give one an idea of a third and entirely new (or old?) type of synagogue architecture. Note the dark recess in the rear, with the door and window. This constitutes a sort of secret chamber, *arcanum* rather than Ark, in which the Scrolls of the Law are treasured. The high brick platform of the Mimbar, or reading desk, with its four wooden poles, is also quaint if not beautiful. The man to the left is a poor Dallâl Moussa, robed in blue cotton, who used to bring me a Kosher wild pigeon, stewed in saffron, every day; very tough, but Kosher.

#### SIKAL

In an appendix to the 1897 report of the Anglo-Jewish Association (xxvi., 47) I gave a short statement of the educational needs of the Jews in Persia, how the Jews themselves begged their brethren in Europe to establish schools for them, and how the dignitaries of the State and the British and foreign diplomatists of Teheran supported their petition. Since

then, it is gratifying to learn, the *Alliance Israélite*, with the co-operation of our own Anglo-Jewish Association, has started schools there for boys and girls with great success and under most auspicious conditions.

The following is a translation of a letter about schools written and handed to me, one Saturday night, by a silk trader in Reshd as a message to my brethren in London. The original is not without interest for its Persian style and spelling, and the unconscious picture it presents of the low culture but high ideals of the poor Persian Jew. The use of *w* as almost equivalent to *ast* = *est* is noteworthy.

"My help is from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Every year in London they send money to Iran, to every city they send, but to a little city, Siakal is its name, it is in the district of Reshd. All Israel in Siakal, all are poor, a hundred households, there is no teacher of children, there are no schools, there is one synagogue. They are all poor, and under the rule of Ishmaelites, who are very cruel. There is much oppression (גלות). In London they do not know of the village, Siakal is its name, in the province of Reshd. There are Jews there. For God's sake. The Jews of Siakal are all poor."

Already, Mr. Cazès writes, Jew-baiting is dead in Teheran, and he has every hope of starting other schools in Hamadan and Isfahan, and perhaps even in Shiraz. Our school at Teheran has already had an excellent effect on both children and parents. Nobody hears anything more about persecutions. Big people and small alike show sympathy with our work, and it is the general opinion that in a short time the Israelites will be much more advanced than the Mussulmans.

## THE SADR E AÂZEM

H. B. M. Minister, Sir Mortimer Durand, introduced me to the Sadr e Aâzem, the all-powerful Chief Minister of the Shah, who made his first entry into his capital during our stay there. We discussed at some length the unsatisfactory position of the Jews. The Sadr e Aâzem protested that the new Shah was even more merciful than the martyred (i. e., assassinated) Shah, his father, and that he himself had always treated the Jews well—so well, indeed, that the Moullahs sometimes found fault with him, and he had given orders—and would repeat them—that the promises of religious toleration held forth by Shah Nasr ed Din when he visited Europe should be carried out to the letter. The Jews, he said, need have no fear that their condition would deteriorate under the new Shah, who was as merciful as he was just. But their position would be much improved if they were better educated.

The Firma Firmân, or Governor of Teheran, whose status as both brother-in-law and son-in-law of the Shah makes him one of the most influential men in Persia (and who, by the by, manifested considerable jealousy of the Sadr e Aâzem), sent for me. While insisting upon the enlightened principles with which all Persians now regard religious nonconformity, he taunted the rich Jews of Europe with their total neglect of their brethren, and said that schools on a European system were urgently needed, and that his Imperial master and public opinion, too, would gladly welcome and even second any efforts in this direction. Since I left Teheran, the Sadr e Aâzem has fallen from



power, and a new ministry has been constituted, of which the Firma Firmân is one of the most important members. General Sir Thomas Gordon, who is a competent authority on the subject, believed that the new ministry is less reactionary than the last, and he urged that a school should be established for the Jews without further delay.

The Jews of Teheran themselves were no less anxious that this should be done, and gave me to understand that they would contribute at least six hundred tomans per annum if such a school could be established under the auspices of the Anglo-Jewish Association or the *Alliance Israélite*. There is a local fund available for that purpose, which produces three hundred tomans per annum—at the present rate of exchange about seventy-five pounds. The Teheran Jewish community has now been established some hundred and fifty years, and is mainly composed of immigrants from Kâshan, Yazd, Isfahan, and Hamadan. Although it numbers barely four thousand souls, there are fourteen little synagogues in the Persian capital, but only a couple of Talmud Torah schools, where nothing is taught but Hebrew, and that of the most elementary description. In the words of the Rabbi, "Nothing of external learning is taught, for there is nobody there who can teach."

מחכמת החיצונים איננו לומדים כלל ועיקר לפי שאין לנו מלמד

#### JEWISH DISABILITIES

The Teheran Jews are poor, but ignorant. Their chief complaint of persecution is in respect of three points:—

- (a) They are practically restricted to the ghetto, although Jews may now live in two Fondaks in the bazaar outside the Sûk el Yehudiyeh.
- (b) When a Moslem kills a Jew he need pay only thirty-three tomans blood-money. This is the local tariff for manslaughter generally, but as Jews do not kill Moslems they complain that this *Wehrgeld* should not be so low.
- (c) When a Jew is converted to Islam he succeeds to all the property of his Jewish relatives, to the exclusion of all the next-of-kin who have remained Jews. This seems to depend on custom, not law.

Obviously a benevolent Government could easily dispose of all these grievances, but it is precisely the good-will of the Government which should be cultivated. At present the Jews of Europe are themselves in default, because they have taken no steps in an educational direction. Teheran Jews are in a better position than those who live further from the capital. The influence of the diplomatists of the Powers is not sufficiently felt to keep things even fairly right outside of Teheran.

#### NOTABLES

The following is a list of some of the more prominent lay members of the Jewish community of Teheran:—

Aga Meir, a silk merchant and a British subject.  
 Moullah Moûkhtar Cohen Teherani, jeweller.  
 Moullah Yekutiel (Ismael) Kashani.

Aga David Kashani, merchant.

Chacham Nahurai (Nour Mahmoud), physician.

David Michael Teherani, banker.

Aaron Isfahani, jeweller.

Daoud "Hannah" Goli, broker.

Eliahu Dardashti.

Eli Safon.

Rofe Eliahu of Chumsa.

Aziz Ulla, jeweller.

I have only to add that it was not alone in Teheran that our co-religionists and others pressed upon me their real need and longing for a school. At Reshd and Kazvin the same request was made. The American Mission School is the only institution where anything in the nature of modern educational advantages can be acquired by native Jews, and for obvious reasons it is undesirable that they should be taught there.

## ZAKASPIE

A Bird's-eye View of the Transcaspian — Passports — Routes — Krasnovodsk — General Kuropatkin — Diseases — The Railway — Fighting the Sand — Water — Passengers — The Persian Frontier — Geok Tepe — Aschabad — The Ruins of Annau — Merv — The Yadidin — River Oxus — New Bokhara — Bokhara — Jews — Synagogue — Ethnology — Manuscripts and Literature — City Sights — Samarkand — Tamerlane — Russianization — Cotton.

### A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE TRANSCASPIAN

THE tourist at Constantinople is told that the modern Turk has become very enlightened, that he is no longer particular even as to the seclusion of his women, and that he has seriously agitated for the abolition of the Yashmak. But the Turkish ladies met in solemn conclave and resolved on the retention of the provoking veil which shades all but their lovely eyes. And why? Because, with true Oriental subtilty, they argue that it is precisely the mystery of the Yashmak which lends them charm, and the Byronic stranger would cease to be Byronic if he discovered that an Eastern beauty stripped of such accessories could not compete with her fair sisters of the West. The jealous zeal with which the Russians seek to hide their Transcaspian possessions from the Western eye seems to be founded on a similarly feminine prejudice. The world is agog with curiosity about the glammers of Tamerlane's historic capital and the famous city which Marco Polo found so *moult grand et noble*. In sober truth, however, Samarkand and Bokhara are two interesting

Oriental cities, and the road there a waste of hideous sand or steppe barely a degree less hideous. Two days and a half it takes to rail over on General Anenkoff's road, and all the time the English Traveller feels a kind of malignant joy that Russia is not really to be envied for her much-vaunted empires of Transcaspia and Turkestan.

And yet there is a good deal on the way which strikes one as beautiful and strange. The railway itself is a stupendous fact. Happy in its environment, it cannot become commonplace. The lands it traverses are still comparatively *terrae incognitae*, and the *impressions de voyage* of a latter-day traveller, to whom Vámbéry had wished God-speed, and who went to Turkestan post-haste and hurried back, may be of a little interest. The special inducement which prompted me to choose the Transcaspian as the place to spend a vacation was the report that Hebrew and Hebræo-Persian MSS. were still to be unearthed at Bokhara. My visit the year before to Teheran by way of the Caspian had been successful and had whetted my appetite. The Foreign Office authorities were good enough to obtain for me the necessary permit. H. B. M. Ambassador at Petersburg applied for it on May 28, 1897, but it was not until August 27 that the Russian Consul in London received instructions by telegram to *viser* my passport. Apparently the sanction was somewhat grudgingly bestowed, but then this was because I am not only an Englishman, but also a Jew. However, the *visa* once inscribed on my passport, I had no further trouble. Indeed, after I had once passed the frontier at Wirballen, it was not demanded until I reached Samarkand. But I was ex-

pected all along the Transcaspian line. At Krasnovodsk, on the Caspian Sea, I was shown a *dossier* in which I could decipher my own name, but, alas, nothing more. At Bokhara, the Russian political agent said he had been duly advised, and so he very kindly provided me with an official Djiguit to show me the sights. At Samarkand also I was *en règle*, and at Aschabad the stationmaster was good enough to give me a *coupé* for myself! Two Italians who were with me for part of the time, and an Englishman whom I met had been informed at Petersburg that they, too, were duly authorized to travel on the Transcaspian, but the authorization does not seem to have been communicated to the officials in Central Asia. Still they were not molested nor interfered with in any way. The officials at Krasnovodsk let them pass with an intimation that they would be liable to be turned back at any point *en route*. As a matter of fact nothing happened, and I fancy that the experience of Mr. Budgett Meakin, who got to Samarkand with his sister, and without a permit—and, after he got there and had seen all he wanted, was told to go home—was only unusual in the sense that the last formality is generally omitted.

#### PASSPORTS

Passport arrangements and Custom House formalities in general were easier this year than I have ever known them before. On my first visit to Russia some friends named Blomfield—a name surely familiar to the Russian diplomatist—were persecuted by the attentions of the police, who followed them about wherever they went, in the altogether erroneous belief that they

were Jews and therefore suspects. A second time—it was during the great cholera epidemic of 1892—I had to avoid Lublin, because it had been notified in the Official Gazette that while all non-Jewish travellers would have to be disinfected and sent on at once, Jewish travellers would be detained in quarantine for a week! In 1896, when I passed through Moscow, the “Slaviansky Bazaar” people could not get back my passport from the police authorities because these had not yet been able to obtain the personal signature of the Governor-General, which was requisite in the case of a Jew. I had to go to the police office myself and explain that as I was a Jew and holy Moscow out of the Pale of Jewish Settlement, they ought to be only too glad to get rid of me that same evening. The joke, or perhaps a threat of complaint to St. Petersburg, brought me the passport within the hour. In 1897, however, I am thankful to say that I observed no signs of Jew-baiting. And generally there seemed a more liberal spirit abroad. There was no bother about books or newspapers. At Paris I had been warned that it was quite hopeless to attempt to bring any books into Russia without special authorization. Well, I had Curzon’s “Russia in Central Asia,” Dobson’s “Russia’s Railway Advance,” “Bonvallot,” and similar books. Curzon I placed at the very top of my kit-bag, but it was passed with an indifference so outspoken a work hardly deserved. Its maps and political criticisms alike failed to offend.

#### ROUTES

The quickest, cheapest, and nastiest route to the terminus of the Transcaspian Railway is *via* Berlin,

Warsaw, Moscow, and Rostow to Petrovsk, and thence by steamer direct to Krasnovodsk. I was unfortunate in that I had to increase the length of that journey by passing Petersburg, and, on the sea voyage, calling at Baku. The distance from the Russian frontier to Petrovsk is 3585 versts, and takes five days and a half, but costs only forty-eight roubles first-class and twenty-nine second. The nicest way to Krasnovodsk is *via* Constantinople and Batoum, thence by Transcaucasian railway to Tiflis, then by Troika over the famous Georgian military road across the Caucasus to Vladikawkas, and thence to Petrovsk. The return journey may be varied by taking the steamer from Batoum, Poti, or Novorossisk, by Kertch, Eupatoria, Yalta, and Sevastopol to Odessa, and home by Lemberg, Cracow, and Vienna. The steamer fare from Petrovsk to Krasnovodsk is twenty-one roubles, and the crossing generally takes thirty hours. Second-class fare from Krasnovodsk to Samarkand, a distance of 1454 versts, is only about twenty roubles. There is no first class yet on the Transcaspian line, and altogether its rolling stock is still lamentably deficient, but they are now building carriages at Aschabad, and by next May, when the extensions to Tashkend and Khokan are expected to be open to traffic, things will probably improve. Even now one must be specially unlucky not to find throughout all the Russias, and even in a second-class carriage, a folding bed for each passenger, and one lavatory and one closet in each carriage. And the carriages are swept and cleaned at intervals throughout the day, so that they are always fairly comfortable.





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BOKHARIOTS

## KRASNOVODSK

As the steamer approaches Krasnovodsk, what first catches the eye is the smart little railway station built of gleaming white granite against a background of bare purple mountains—a fitting temple to dedicate to the cult of the iron horse. Hardly less attractive are the other stations on the line, though the background fails as soon as the range of hills which here forms the Russo-Persian frontier is left behind. The next thing to notice is the block of outward as well as inward goods traffic, especially cotton, and this, too, is to be seen all along the line. The breakdown of the Amu Daria Bridge, which during two months necessitated trans-shipment into steamers, must have contributed to the block, but we were told by a high official in the Railway Civil Service that the fault was entirely due to the military mismanagement of the line. Military men were good generals, but bad business men, and had no idea of statistics or engineering. The plans they submitted for a new stone bridge were impossible, dimensions and quantities alike ludicrous, and so for three years the new stone bridge has been talked about but not begun. They could not cope with the traffic, did not provide the necessary facilities for trade and were utterly deficient in initiative.

## GENERAL KUROPATKIN

General Kuropatkin is at one and the same time Governor-General of the Transcaspian Province and dictator of the railway. He was Skobelev's right-hand man, and even the enemies of both admit that he possesses more backbone than that favorite hero. By most Russians he is regarded as the chief military

genius of the day and the hope of the Empire.' By a few he is looked upon as being somewhat of a *poseur*, fond of display and inclined to be a theorist. I can bear witness to the splendor of his special train and to the weird and almost awe-inspiring effect of his entry into Samarkand—his landau preceded by four Djiguits, native police outriders, galloping ahead with blazing *flambeaux* waved high above their heads—a sort of living picture out of "The Talisman," or perhaps part of a Lord Mayor's Show in a fog. For the rest he is said to be good-natured with plenty of *bonhomie*. Though he is a great stickler for Panslavism, and professes a rigid intention to admit only Russians *pur sang* into his Emperor's new territories, the climate has been too much for him and his fellow-countrymen. All sorts of inducements are offered to Russians to settle, but with comparatively little success. Armenians and Jews, though native-born Russian subjects, are regarded as aliens and not encouraged. But they are acclimatized, and so at the present time much of the trade of Samarkand and Bokhara is in their hands. Russian civil servants fight shy of the three years' service for which they have now to covenant, and, notwithstanding their high pay and other privileges, return, or rather escape, to cold Russia as opportunity offers. Nor is this surprising when one thinks that 101° F. is a common temperature during half the year and 160° F. in the shade not unknown, that it is impossible to dwell except in cities, that these are twelve hours distant by rail one

<sup>1</sup> He is now commander-in-chief of the Russian armies fighting against Japan.

from the other, with a howling wilderness between, and that each of them is notorious for a special complaint, to which the new-comer is more liable than the native.

#### DISEASES

The endemic disease at Khokan is Zob, or goitre; at Samarkand, Prokaza, or lupus; at Bokhara, Rishta, or inguinal worm; at Merv, typhoidal malaria; and at Aschabad, Pendinka, or eczema. Influenza, we were told, had been deadly throughout Turkestan, and it is the disease of which natives and visitors alike are now most afraid. Lepers, not all loathsome in appearance, but all doomed to living death, are to be seen outside all the great towns, squatting along the roadside, on the way, significantly enough, to the burial grounds and tombs of the saints, so as to beg from the pious and gain the pittance on which they live.

Throughout Central Asia fever is prevalent. In the army, indeed, every ache, from toothache to rheumatism, is ascribed to fever and dosed with quinine. Even in Old Bokhara the cult of that magic drug is so far advanced that the local chemist supplies it in convenient little gelatine cylinders, which have been so recently invented as not yet to be known in the London market. And, by the by, it is a significant fact that in every Russian town it is the apothecary's Apteka which is the finest and largest shop, and apparently does the biggest trade.

#### THE RAILWAY

Krasnovodsk, as the terminus of the Transcaspian line, is only three years old. It has recently replaced

Uzun Ada, which was about a hundred versts nearer Samarkand, but which labored under the disadvantage of being a bad harbor with little water and inaccessible during some of the prevailing winds.

The junction of the old line and the new one is at Dschebel station. The new line hugs the sea-coast for a few miles, and then gradually recedes and runs parallel to the escarpment of the last outspur of the mountains, which constitute the Russo-Persian frontier. The line itself is pretty nearly level, gradients are excessively light, and tunnels there are none all the way. There are numerous bridges, but to a layman only three seemed important—those over the Murghab, the Oxus, and over the Zarafshan near Samarkand. The Persian mountains continue right along to the Amu Daria, and are a welcome relief to the monotonous level on the other side of the line. There is plenty of water at Krasnovodsk, and the Russians are so pleased with the place that they propose to make another great railway from there to Khiva, a distance of about three hundred miles. But the heat and dust are simply awful, and give a fitting foretaste of what one has to expect in Central Asia. The one compensation is that a refreshing sea bath can be taken there for five kopecks. Armenians use the sea for washing purposes, and we were somewhat perplexed when we saw one jump into the water, break two eggs on his head, and wash his hair with the yolks.

Between Krasnovodsk and Aschabad the stations are hardly more than halting places to enable meeting trains to pass each other, the Transcaspian Railway being of course a single track throughout. The buffets are rarely provided with more than two or three eggs

and onions, and the indispensable Vodka. There were a couple of botanists in the train on our return journey, and they lost no opportunity of getting out and collecting specimens in the steppe and dunes, finding different species of the same plants at each successive station.

### FIGHTING THE SAND

But even the unscientific traveller, innocent of botany, cannot fail to be struck by the effective process adopted for checking the encroachment on the line of sand avalanches by means of saxaoul plantations, which for hundreds of versts run parallel with the iron track. Sand is the snow of the steppe, and a more insidious enemy to the civil engineer. The desert is nowhere perfectly flat; it is undulated by waves, the crest of which is often twenty feet higher than the base, and as the prevailing wind seems to be N. E., the S. W. side of the wave falls away precipitously, and while the surface of the summit is comparatively firm for walking, it is dangerous to walk too near the edge. One fact, however, struck us very much. General Anenkoff and the projectors of the line took precautions, far-sighted and reasonably calculated to be effective, but his successors, the men now in charge, do not trouble about giving his measures a fair chance. At station after station, wherever we found herbage and plants, there we found also spoor of camel and buffalo and goat. No care is taken to preserve the shrubs so anxiously reared; in many places the surface has been nibbled bare. And yet it would be quite easy to fence off a few feet either side of the line, and leave the herds and flocks of the Tekkes to be content with a

scantier area of pasturage. Before the advent of the Russians, they had nothing at all in many places.

Another consideration that occurred to us was as to the possibility of replacing the saxaouls in process of time by fir-trees and thus re-afforesting the country. This has been found practicable in many of the waste places and sand-dunes of Europe, and it ought not to be difficult in Asia. We were told that an experiment of the kind had not proved quite successful on the banks of the Volga, but there is evidently nobody in office whose business it is to look after forestry in Turkestan, and the consequence is that even in Samarkand, the City of Trees, where in one stately boulevard there is an avenue composed of twelve lines of giant trees, wood is terribly expensive, and has to be imported from the interior of Russia.

#### WATER

To persons not scientific the stations were interesting for the glimpses they gave of the tall but deliberate Turcoman on his native steppe, trading for a huge Arbuza water-melon, or the more luscious D'ynja. This is the melon properly so-called, but the Russian avoids it as fever-giving, perhaps because it requires water to feed it, and for drinking purposes all water in Central Asia is dangerous as well as rare.

The railway trains must carry their own water; a huge cask is attached to each engine by way of tender. The kitchen-car next the "buffet" is roofed by a cistern of water, the supply of which is constantly renewed at the stations by filtered drinking-water, hauled up by the attendants pail by pail. At each station also there is a cask of such water, to which the

native passengers rush as soon as the train arrives, and from which the Russian ladies, who make their own "chi" on board, fill their teapots.

#### PASSENGERS

On the up-journey we found the train inconveniently crowded. All the second-class tickets available were soon sold out, and many a respectable merchant of Turkestan, in flowing robes and picturesque turban, had to content himself with the bare boards of third-class. But third-class carriages, although the fare is uniform, are subdivided into three varieties. First come the luggage-trucks for native sarts, laborers, and shepherds, into and out of which they scramble as best they can, and where of their own modest bundles they make seats or beds.

Of the remaining third-class passengers, the Persians, Jews, and Armenians, and the Sunnite merchants mostly keep together, and the third variety consists of the inferior Russian employees and soldiers and servants. Russians excepted, the train was monopolized by traders homeward bound from the great annual fair at Nijni Novgorod. Many of these were pious traders and had extended their commercial travel into a religious pilgrimage further west—the Moham-medans to Mecca and the Jews to Jerusalem. The Jews were full of the Zionist Congress at Basle, and in all innocence asked me whether the Messiah was at hand, and Queen Victoria had given Palestine to the Jews!

So many of those returning traders and pilgrims were there that the only three tourists in the train were crowded out of second-class into third, and glad



enough to find in a third-class carriage room to lie down for the night. Even the table in the "buffet-wagon" was used as a bed by one or two weary travellers. If such were an ordinary instance of passenger traffic on the line, it would be easy to credit the Russian boast that the Transcaspian Railway pays the Government nearly three per cent. on the original outlay.

During my short visit, however, I used the train five times, and only once was it so inconveniently crowded. Now, there are only three passenger trains a week each way, and so one cannot help thinking that there must be something wrong with the statistics. But Russia is rich enough to abstain from counting the cost where reasons military or political call for action. And so there is little doubt that the projected line from Khiwa to Krasnovodsk and the stupendous Mongolian line will be constructed very soon, although the one may not, and the other cannot, ever pay expenses.

The average distance between stations is rather less than fifteen miles, and the time it takes to traverse it about one hour. A time-table of the trains which go to and from Samarkand three times a week would serve to show that many of the stations are only halting places named after the engineers of the line or other men whom the Russian Chauvinist delighteth to honor.

#### THE PERSIAN FRONTIER

The Persian mountains near Ushak present the characteristic appearance of a great wall rising suddenly and sharply from the dead flat. They are most precipitous and treeless, with dry torrent beds to indi-

cate where the rainfall goes in the rainy season. Though it was a hundred degrees in the shade, we noticed "Oblaka," feathery clouds, radiating from the mountains and indicating wintry weather in the Persian highlands. One cannot help thinking that, from the military point of view, the line would be all the safer if it were not so near a mountain frontier; but then the Russians have nowhere shown that they are very frightened of their Persian neighbors, and we English are not thought likely ever to advance so far north in Persia as to be of much use to its rulers in frontier fighting.

At Bami, about sixteen hours' distance from Krasnovodsk, one first begins to come across the native Turcoman at home. Tekke Turcomans mostly appeal to one for their size. They are all tall, and their huge woolly caps add to their height. Like most giants, they seem good-humored enough, and it was funny to see the little Russian soldiers ordering them about without fear or compunction. Their wives and daughters are brightly dressed, comely, and unveiled, and bedecked with quaint silver trinkets.

#### GEOK TEPE

About a hundred versts further east we come to Geok Tepe, famous in the military annals of the century. It was the last obstacle to the Russian conquest of Turkestan, and the name of Skobelev the Destroyer will ever be associated with its capture. In our train travelled one of Skobelev's most trusted henchmen, the Captain Sijmen, who was in command of the naval brigade which so materially helped the Russian advance. Like all Finlanders, the gallant captain spoke English,

and waxed enthusiastic over the prowess of Skobeleff and Kuropatkin. He went over the battle for our benefit, correcting Curzon's account here and there, but expressing amazement at his general accuracy. With us he climbed the breach once more, but, though he got up all right, the *descensus Averni* was not so easy. He slipped and fell, and but for the friendly assistance of a couple of jolly "Selniks," the train might have left him on the very field where six years ago a Turcoman bullet had laid him low and deprived him of the *kudos* of leading the final charge. Trees are now planted round the station which bears the famous name of Geok Tepe, and blood-red oleander blooms, fitting type of the massacre with which the battle ended. But within the walls of circumvallation are ruins only and dank grass, and the modern Turcoman leads his camels gingerly over the broken but still steep ruined walls, and takes them to pasture where but yesterday the last heroes of his race fought and died.

#### ASCHABAD

Aschabad, on the edge of the Kara-Kum, or "black sand" of the oasis, is the first town of importance on the line. It is twenty-two hours from the sea by railway, and a favorite starting-point for caravans to Meshed in Persia on the south and to Khiva on the west. The present town, with its long and shady avenues of trees, its large and ugly public buildings, and dreary market squares, is modern and Russian to the core. The Tekke men take care to enter it as rarely as may be, and their women seem to keep out of it altogether. There are plenty of Persians to be seen,

but always *sans famille*. What are called its bazaars are but wide streets with two or three insignificant shops, but they say that Tekke carpets can be bought there better than anywhere else. The only object of interest is the new Greek Church with its three cupolas of sparkling gold, and in front a monument in memory of Skobelev, with a business-like but ornamental cannon at each corner, ready, it would seem, as that hot-headed hero always was, to get into action at the first call. Here I spent the Day of Atonement, and, among our small congregation, were one or two Yaddidin, of whom more anon.

Aschabad itself may be uninteresting, but there are ruins within ten miles which are quite worth going to see. A fairly good carriage track runs parallel to the railway line past some prosperous looking native villages to Annau. But at one spot the softness of the sand makes it almost impossible for horses to drag a carriage through. It is a sign of the end of the oasis.

#### THE RUINS OF ANNAU

A little further on appear the ruins of a whole town dominated by a majestic mosque. Local tradition assigns its destruction to Tamerlane the Destroyer. And evidently it is only since his day that the desert has encroached on the oasis and swallowed up the ancient site. Russian progress may once again carry the war into the enemy's camp and reclaim the site, and already there are signs of Annau becoming again inhabited.

The ruins of Annau are themselves highly interesting. We have the houses of the Tekke natives—each a sort of Martello Tower—easily defended against any number of freebooters that might swoop down upon it

from the adjacent mountains. In Turkestan, at least, every man's house used to be his castle, and though its windows are few, its door inaccessible, and its comforts modest, there is something imposing even in its repellent exterior. But the town is dominated and overshadowed by the really magnificent mosque which stands upon a sort of acropolis. The mosaics and painted tiles are still in a fair state of preservation. They are in all colors and really lustrous; those in Samarkand are quite dull in comparison. What most interested us about the mosque, however, was a large quantity of horns and skulls of *ovis poli*, or mufflon, heaped up in a corner of an inner chamber of the sanctuary, the relics of sacrifices of half a millennium ago, and a long, and really formidable looking serpent which we startled as it lay basking on the top of some *débris*. Luckily the reptile was not less frightened than we were, and vanished before we could do battle with it. It was the only wild animal I encountered during my visit to Central Asia. I heard a few jackals barking at night, and was told that tigers occasionally swam across the Oxus, a mile or two above the bridge, but I really saw nothing else which was wild except a countless number of lively little lizards scintillating in the sand, and one exhausted eagle which was caught on the deck of the good ship "Bariatinsky," half-way across the Caspian. About fifty versts beyond Annau, we came to more ruins at Bada Dur. These now rise up out of the sand, but obviously in times past they must have been outside the desert, and perhaps not even on its verge—another proof of the encroachment of the sand.

Fifty versts further we came to Dushak, interesting

for its black-fezzed Persians waiting at the station. This is the point on the line nearest to the Persian frontier, which is here only seven versts distant.

### MERV

Merv, the Queen of Asia, as it once was called, is six hours' distance by rail. It is another instance of how the mighty are fallen, instances of which are so frequent in Central Asia. There are dust heaps a mile or two from the dull and dreary town, and they are evidence of ruins of some extent. But the importance of Merv must always have lain in its geographical position rather than its actual wealth and population. And yet Merv is mentioned in the Zend Avesta, and Alexander the Great helped to build it. A Nestorian Archbishop was enthroned there sixteen centuries ago, and there, in the eighth century, the veiled prophet of Khorasan started a new religion. Parthians, Arabs, Mongols, Persians, Bokhariots, Turcomans, and Russians have all held it in turn.

Its river is the Murghab, which boasts of one of the few really important railway bridges of the Transcaspian. Situate not much higher up on this same river is Penjdeh, which in March, 1885, was on the point of causing an Anglo-Russian war. I met an officer who had been on General Komaroff's staff at the time, and he told me some mysterious story as to how Captain Yate had suddenly departed without his luggage. My information was too scanty to enable me to appreciate it as I should have done, but it was obvious that what the British public has heard about the incident is by no means all there is to learn on the subject.

Merv commanded the great roads from Khiva to

Herat, and Bokhara to Meshed, and is thus at the cross-ways of the caravan routes to Persia, Afghanistan and India, China and Turkestan. And it was only in 1883 that its capture by the Russians was deplored by us as the loss of a mighty bulwark to India's defence. I am no politician or military tactician, nor in any way competent to express an opinion, but although there are numbers of Russian soldiers to be seen there, it certainly does not look important to-day.

#### THE YADIDIN

I was interested in Merv because I found it the home of a couple of thousand Marranos, but Marranos of the nineteenth century. Some eighty years ago, under the cruel reign of Shah Nouredin's father, the Jews of Meshed were persecuted beyond the point of endurance. They were given Mahomet's choice of Islam or the sword. They chose Islam, but though they have since outwardly conformed, and are known as Yadidin, they have never abandoned Jewish observances. Only they practice their crypto-Judaism in stealth and in terror for their lives. If they go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, they pass Jerusalem by the way, and the wailing wall is to them still more sacred than the black stone of the Kibla. There are said to be two thousand such Yadidin at Meshed, fifty or sixty families at Merv, a few at Aschabad, and several at Bokhara and Samarkand. At Samarkand I had the privilege of becoming godfather to the son of such a Yadida, who keeps every Jewish custom scrupulously, and is bitterly ashamed of his and his father's temporary bowing in the Temple of Rimmon. The Russians, whose frontier policy has always been somewhat Machiavellian, are said to en-

courage the settlement of such Yadidin as well as the Babis, or Shiite Protestants, within their borders, as tending to Russianize the adjoining territories.

#### RIVER OXUS

A couple of hundred versts beyond Merv, we come to the far-famed Amu Daria, the Oxus of the classics, but dear to all Islam as the Gihon, or Jihoun, of Scripture. On our way out we were fortunate enough to find that the long but frail wooden bridge had broken down, and that there was solution of continuity where the current was most rapid. And so we had to cross the Oxus on a little steamboat which had been brought there by rail in eight parts a few months before. We saw other steamers lying off Chardjuy, which is a quaint and quite important little town on the banks of the great river. One of these steamers had just brought some hundreds of time-expired soldiers from Kharki, the chief Russian garrison on the Afghan frontier. I was told that there are never less than three thousand Russian soldiers under arms at Kharki, ready for any emergency, and to judge by the numbers of ex-soldiers we saw, this number is probably under the mark. A Russian soldier's length of service varies according to the station of his regiment, from two years and eight months in Europe to six years and eight months in the Amoor Province, east of China, where Russian troops are concentrating more and more. At Kharki they serve as Turkestan soldiers for four years and eight months. The disembarkation was effected in such rollicking high spirits as spoke volumes both for the monotony of Kharki and the *bonhomie* of the Russian soldier, which nearly five years of iron drill



had been unable to quell. Some of these soldiers were on their way back to their homes on the German frontier, near Lodz, and all were delighted at the prospect of the fatted calf that was in preparation for them. They were merry souls, and vowed that the Czar gives his men enough to eat, and with a light heart talked of the coming war with the "Anglichanka," or English Lady, as Queen Victoria was called. Our trans-shipment from train to steamer was very picturesque, and lent itself to the camera. Turcoman porters, half-naked and quite regardless of the tropical sun, carried the most nondescript kinds of burdens down the inclined plane which had been improvised to lead from the railroad to the meadow of lofty bulrushes which hid the river banks. The contents of our train would have astonished the most phlegmatic Yankee traveller: feather-beds and mattresses and pillows of every hue; melons as large as pumpkins, and grapes in bunches which recalled those of the Jewish spies in the wilderness; guns more ornamental than effective, and umbrellas of all sorts; modern Gladstone bags and saddle-bags, or "Marfrush," that might have carried the possessions of the Patriarchs thousands of years ago.

A train was waiting on the other side, but the crossing was difficult, calling for delicate navigation, and took four hours. The main stream of the Oxus is only six hundred and fifty yards wide, but the bridge is placed at a wider part, where there are islands to buttress it. The main channel is twenty-five to twenty-nine feet deep, and the rapidity of the current reminds one of the Rhone at Lyons. It must run at least six miles an hour. In ordinary circumstances the train takes pretty nearly half-an-hour to cross the

bridge from end to end. An ordinary engine is too heavy to be trusted upon it, and so a tiny engine-tender on four wheels takes its place, and looks more like a model than a work-a-day locomotive.

East of the Amu Daria the oasis soon loses itself in sand once more. Whether it is that the banks are too steep to admit of extensive inundation, or that the soil is too thirsty, or the sand too persistent, the "other side of the river," as the natives call it, is disappointingly arid. One was almost forced to perpetrate the pun that the great river was, after all, but "a mud area." "Loess" is as rich and fertile as Nile mud, and yields eightyfold. Only there is not enough of it, for the desert soon swallows up its curious melon gardens, and a hundred versts intervene between the river and the great oasis of Bokhara.

#### NEW BOKHARA

As the train approached Bokhara Station, the natives showed obvious marks of excitement, and the scene at the railway station was quite touching to witness. The phlegmatic Oriental of fable is not to be seen in Turkestan. On the contrary, the native seems all nerves and emotions. Pilgrims were welcomed by the stay-at-homes with kisses and embraces, and even a mere acquaintance stroked his beard, if he had one, or his face, if he had not, in token of satisfaction and welcome. Bokhara station is about ten miles distant from the capital. It is surrounded by "Novoe Bokhara," a new Persian town, intensely dull and supremely uninteresting, where reside all the Europeans whom business or office requires to live near the famous old city. There are two hotels of one story

and scant accommodation, and the large and important-looking Embassy, where the amiable political agent, M. Ignatieff, resides. The road to Old Bokhara is not devoid of interest. Cotton plantations, a picturesque village or two, and many trees relieve the monotony of the way, and a continuous stream of natives on horseback, camel-back, and donkey-back, narrow carts with colossal wheels, and worn-out Droschkys raise the dust and prevent one from feeling lonely. Nearer Bokhara one passes rose and pomegranate gardens, the Gulistans of Persian poetry, but, alas, they are surrounded by high walls, and the gate-keepers are either dense or not venal.

#### BOKHARA

Bokhara itself is a wonderful old city. Surrounded by a picturesque old wall of the time of the Crusaders, with castellated gates and towers, it has no room to expand. There are burial-grounds within the walls, which still further restrict the space available for building. But, happily, Russian advice, which is here equivalent to a command, precludes the Bokhariots from any longer burying their dead near the houses of the living. Their streets are narrow and not straight, and on either side rise the high walls of truly Oriental houses, with windows giving only on internal courts. At sundown the gates are shut and the streets deserted. The rash traveller who has delayed his return to town till night has to rouse the watchman and persuade him to open the city gate. And, *experto crede*, it is both uncomfortable and uncanny to grope one's way home through dark and empty lanes with all the curs of Bokhara barking at one's heels. Near the

centre of the bazaar one or two watchmen, with lantern and rattles, make night hideous by their cries, and scare the ghosts. But I have walked nearly two miles in Bokhara, within the walls, without seeing a single soul, and that a good two hours before midnight.

There are two or three caravanserais in the old town, but no place where for payment a European can lodge with any comfort. I was fortunate enough to be put up at the Moscow Bank, the only building furnished in anything like European style. But, of course, the absence of all signs of Western civilization makes Bokhara all the more interesting. A week is not too long a time to spend there.

### Jews

Most of that time I spent with my co-religionists, of whom four or five thousand reside there, inhabiting a special quarter, and wearing a special badge on their clothing. Their Rabbi is Mollah Hezekiah ha-Kohen, whose father had been Rabbi before him. Perhaps I was prejudiced in their favor, but they certainly struck me as most intelligent and hospitable. Many of them were great travellers. One man had been to China; several had visited India by way of Afghanistan and the Khyber Pass. At least a couple of hundred were Hadjis who had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and there are at the present moment at least that number of Bokhariots settled in Jerusalem with the pious purpose of living and dying there. Most of the travelled Jews of Bokhara have been to Moscow, many to Paris, and some to London. One good man had been five times to Moscow. His first journey was by caravan, by way of Astrakhan and the Volga,

and it took him eighty days and cost him five hundred roubles. But that was nearly forty years ago. None of the Bokhariot Jews are rich, but most of them seem to earn a livelihood. Some are cotton growers, and some grow grapes, and some cultivate tobacco; many are merchants trading to Moscow, and exchanging carpets for manufactured goods, and importing India tea, from Bombay, *via* Batoum and Baku.

Their standard of culture is much higher than might be expected. Half of them could speak Hebrew, and in synagogue on Rosh Hashanah, I heard an itinerant Rabbi from Safed preach evolution in a Hebrew sermon. His theme was the Rabbinical dictum that "Repentance, Prayer, and Charity avert the evil decree." But how, he asked, can the world's course be changed? And he answered, that gradually and by degrees we can divert the mightiest river, and persuade Nature to change her countenance.

#### SYNAGOGUE

The chief synagogue is some five or six hundred years old, with additions of more modern date, constituting something like chapels in a cathedral, divine service being held separately in each. Of course, it has a Genizah, or hidden chamber, in the roof, for the preservation of disused sacred writings. Among the papers there, I found, carefully folded up, no less an antique than a placard printed in Bengali and English, and announcing a conjuring performance which was to have taken place at Calcutta in 1866, under the auspices of one Professor Vanek, "Grand Wizard of the North" !

Most of the Jewish householders had books, gener-



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SYNAGOGUE AT BOKHARA

ally in Hebrew, or Persian in Hebrew characters. But they were richer in early prints than in manuscripts. There were several *incunabula*, and amongst them the Ixar Pentateuch printed in Spain in 1490, two years before the expulsion of the Spanish Jews. The copy is important, because of its marginal notes and corrections, which show that it had been collated at Cairo with the famous Ben Asher Codex, written there in 897, exactly one thousand years ago, and the oldest dated Hebrew Bible MS. in the world. There were also some pages of the Catalonian prayer book, printed in 1526 in Salonica for the Jewish exiles from Barcelona, and many Constantinopolitan prints, which are either unique or very rare. *Habent sua fata libelli* may be fitly applied to the wandering Jewish books.

#### ETHNOLOGY

There are perhaps twenty thousand Jews in the Khanate, most of whom live in the towns. Jews have for centuries been resident in both country and capital. Like their neighbors, the Afghans, the Bokhariots in general, and especially the Turcomans, are by many believed to be descended from the Ten Tribes; but the Jews of Bokhara are Talmud Jews, and are probably descended from the Babylonian Jews who migrated eastward after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans. Their family names prove that many came from Persia *via* Merv and some from Khiva.

The Chinese Jews of Kai-Fong-Foo are probably originally from Bokhara, the Persian rubrics in their liturgies being in the Bokharian dialect. The Bokhara Jews themselves have a tradition that their ancestors settled in various parts of Persia and especially at

Sabzawar, two days' journey from Meshed; that they were removed thence under the conqueror Genghis Khan (1220) to Balkh and Samarkand; and that when Samarkand fell into ruin, under Babi Mehemet Khan, the conqueror of Shah Abbas (1598), they went to Bokhara, where there was a Jewish colony; and some of them emigrated thence to Tsheen Patsheen (China), but soon ceased to have communication with their mother-country, though they "carried their genealogies with them."

The missionary Wolff visited Bokhara, in 1832, when Mollah Pinchas, the elder, was chief Rabbi, and there were four synagogues in the city. Wolff estimated the number of Jews at ten thousand, and he states that they paid only three hundred dollars per annum by way of tax to Bahadur Khan. He also states that there were three hundred Jewish families, converts to Mohammedanism, who were scorned by the general population, and who intermarried with the Gholoom or slaves of Persia and not with the Uzbegs.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century one Joseph ben Moses Maimon, a native of Tetuan, and therefore called "Mughrebi," came to Bokhara *via* Jerusalem and Bagdad. He found the Jews ignorant and unobservant, and revolutionized their ritual and practice, sending to Europe for Hebrew books. The Jews have now forgotten their old Persian liturgy and have adopted that of the Sephardim of Italy, in the belief that they are descended, as Maimon was, from the Spanish refugees of 1492. Rabbi Joseph Maimon had an unsuccessful rival in a learned Yemenite Jew, Rabbi Zachariah ben Mazliach,



## MANUSCRIPTS AND LITERATURE

Here and in the neighborhood, I acquired about seventy Hebrew and Hebrew-Persian manuscripts, one of which was written in Herat, many of them being transliterations into Hebrew of the great Persian poets, such as Sadi, Iami, and Nizami, and lesser local celebrities, like Tufili, Zeribu of Samarkand, and Musahfiki.

In 1490 there flourished Uzziel Moses ben David, who wrote poems in Hebrew and Persian. Other Jewish poets were Yusuf Yehudi ben Isaac (1688-1755), mentioned above, and his friends Uzbek, Elisha, and Solomon Mollah. Somewhat later were David ben Abraham ben מנחם, Uzziel, Benjamin Siman-Tob, and Eleazar ha-Kohen, and, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ibrahim ibn Abu al-Khair, author of the "Khadaidat" (ed. Salemann, St. Petersburg, 1897).

## CITY SIGHTS

The show places of Bokhara—its horrible prison, its lofty isolated minaret, from the top of which captives were hurled by way of punishment, its Medresses (colleges) and mosques, its busy *registan*, or market place, gleaming with melons and many-colored silks, its sleepy tanks embowered in trees, its camels, veiled women, and Hadjis, its sleek Persian cats, its quaint potteries and oil mills—all these have been often and eloquently described. But Bokhara will ever abide in my memory for its kaleidoscopic multitude of human pictures. Every type of the Orient is here represented, with not a single inharmonious Western

face to break the spell. The crafty Afghan, the proud Pathan, the big Turcoman, the plausible Hindoo, the dapper Persian, and the heathen Chinese—these are but a few of the characters that walk in that old-world city.

### SAMARKAND

Samarkand as a city of ruins is much more imposing than Bokhara, and for the ordinary globe-trotter perfectly entrancing. Everything is associated with the name of its great citizen, Tamerlane, and even the tomb of Daniel the prophet is brought into relation with that mighty monarch. The sarcophagus is over twenty yards long, as befits a prophet's stature. It has been recently covered by a brick chapel with three cupolas, but photographs of the ancient structure can be had in Samarkand. It is grandly placed at the edge of a cliff overhanging the rapid river Seop. Tradition has it that Tamerlane had seen a tomb at Susa, in Persia, with a warning inscribed thereon that none should open its door. And so he broke it open from behind, and found it written that Nebi Daniel was there buried, and the impetuous conqueror had the sarcophagus removed with all reverence, and carried it with him to his own capital to be its palladium.

The local Jews do not believe the story nor do they quite disbelieve it, for I went with two who prayed there as at the grave of the righteous. Some of them think that Samarkand is the new Samaria founded by the Ten Tribes what time Israel was taken captive by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria.

## TAMERLANE

But Tamerlane's tomb is not apocryphal, and it is really one of the most impressive of the world's show-places. The entrance to the building is, of course, ornamented with a marvellous display of the floral and geometric turquoise and green and other tiles for which the city is so famous. They are not lustrous but rather dead in color and yet not the less beautiful. The interior is a small chapel with some half-dozen coffins—Tamerlane's is of black stone, and his son's, his mother's, and his teacher's are of the whitest marble, with two plumed standards at the head of the Ulema. In the vault below are the actual marble caskets in which the bodies were enshrined. Tamerlane's is closely engraved with Arabic characters. The surrounding border announces all his titles, "Ameer Timur," etc., and the body of the inscription gives his pedigree up to Adam, the whole altogether more legible than credible.

Of Ulug Beg, the astronomer, and Baba Khaneem, the foreign queen, and all the other *cinquo cento* worthies, there are numerous memorials still extant. Most of them, however, have suffered seriously from the effects of the earthquake on Friday, September 24. Cracks have widened, many tiles have tumbled down, and walls have fallen or threaten to fall. The crooked minarets of the great Medres have become more crooked still, and even modern buildings have been much damaged. There were two distinct shocks at eight and eleven in the evening, and nothing like it has been known for a generation. The inhabitants were terror-stricken. But earthquakes are by no means

uncommon nor are violent weather changes infrequent, so that it would be a boon to science if Russia would establish seismological observatories throughout its Asiatic possessions, with a view to the registration of such phenomena.

#### RUSSIANIZATION

Apart from its ruins Samarkand is not particularly fascinating. It has been Russian for several years, and the contrast between the native and the modern quarter tends to grow less and less striking. The Sart Bazaar has been made accessible for carriages by an autocratic road which has broken right through the ancient town and divided it in twain. The *tout ensemble* therefore is not so picturesque as Bokhara's, but it has many beautiful corners and archways, and clumps of ancient trees. It is not a walled city, and all the houses seem to have been able to expand freely, so that flowers and trees grace every courtyard. It lies a thousand feet higher than Bokhara, with a greater rain-fall, and occasional snow.

Samarkand boasts a museum, which contains a number of rare Bactrian and Persian coins, as well as specimens from the coal mines in the Bokhara Hills, and the alluvial gold found in the neighborhood. Preparation is also being made for the *bonâ fide* traveller, for posted up outside the more notable ruins are notices in four languages warning the tourist under heavy penalties not to deface nor remove any antiques. These languages of travel are Russian, Persian, French, and English. This zeal for the protection of monuments is a new and welcome feature in the Russian character.

Here, as elsewhere, the Russians have distinguished themselves by their intelligent plantations. The "Avrahamovsky Boulevar" is a magnificent avenue of twelve rows of poplars, and a worthy monument of Samarkand's first governor. The last, Count Ros-toffzoff, has just died and is bitterly lamented. He was remarkable for his English sympathies, and, indeed, resided in London for some years in honorable exile, by way of punishment for the indiscretion of paying a visit, at Biarritz, to the great Russian socialist, A. E. Herzen. It is significant of Russian progress that Alexander II. pardoned and promoted him, and that Nicholas II. allows Smirnof's "Life and Work of Herzen at Home and Abroad" to be published in St. Petersburg and become the favorite book of 1897.

The glory of New Samarkand seems on the wane. It is no longer the terminus of the Transcaspian Railway, for this has now been extended as far as Tashkend, the capital of Turkestan and seat of Baron Vrevsky's government. The new line is to be opened in May, and is only an installment of Russian railway activity. It is expected to join the great Manchurian main line somewhere in the neighborhood of Lake Balkhash. Russian officials at home and abroad are furnished with a very interesting railway map of Asia, showing the lines constructed or in progress of construction or projected in Siberia, China, and India. The map makes one thoughtful. But if a flying visit to Turkestan justifies the expression of an opinion, one would be inclined to say that the great eastward stream of Russian expansion has been diverted by the Himalayas, and is flowing steadily but irresistibly, not to India,

but to China. And in Asia there is room for two great empires, and England and Russia have no longer any cause for quarrel.

#### COTTON

Commercially, the Transcaspian Railway has already worked wonders. A great trade in cotton has been created by it. In Samarkand, as in Bokhara, cotton is gradually ousting the grape from its area of cultivation, although for centuries the grape has been the Turcoman boast. Even now, it is no rare thing for a local magnate to have at one and the same banquet six or eight kinds of grapes on his table, or rather on his carpet, for there are no tables. Of these, the long Cabul grape, shaped like a kidney, seems the strangest.

Three million poods of cotton were exported in 1896. Two million came from Khokan, including Samarkand, and five hundred thousand from Bokhara. Half a million poods were bought by Poznanski, a great Jewish manufacturer, who employs seven thousand hands in his cotton mills at Lodz in Poland. I was told that the greater part of the trade was in the hands of our co-religionists, and that, though the Transcaspian was outside the Pale of Jewish Settlement, and *de jure* tabooed to the Jew, the Government welcomed them *de facto* as bringing money, business, and prosperity to their new possessions. Technically, the Panslavist would rather have Turkestan and Siberia peopled by Slavs. The Jews, though they be Russian, are not Slavs, and are therefore outside the sympathies of the *soi-disant* Russian patriot. But he has learnt by the experience of at least one generation that the Slavonic race is difficult to acclimatize in the burning

sands of Turkestan or the icy plains of Siberia. So he finds himself compelled to welcome the more adaptable Hebrew.

And herein, I venture to assert, lies the true solution of the Russo-Jewish question. No millionaire, no cohort of millionaires, no government, however strong, can tempt or command a population of millions to cross the seas. Only in Russia itself can the question be solved. And Russia is great enough to suffice for all its inhabitants, even for its Jews. The resources of Siberia and Central Asia are gigantic beyond the dreams of avarice. The world is only now beginning to wake to them. It is a matter of history that Jews helped to develop the trade of America, of India, of Australia, of Africa. Let Russia open the gates of the Pale, and she will find that her Jewish children will be of the makers of her Eastern Empire. And the stone which the builders had refused will become the headstone of the corner.

## A VISIT TO MOISESVILLE

Township, Village, and Farm—The Pampa—Prospects—Russians and Roumanians Compared—Jews in Argentine.

### TOWNSHIP, VILLAGE, AND FARM

A JOURNEY across South America by way of the Andes gives one the opportunity of visiting Moisesville *via* Rosario before touching Buenos Ayres. The latest report of the Jewish Colonization Association (Paris: Veneziani, 1902) gives some particulars about the Hirsch Colonies in Argentine, though it neither mentions the staff or even the Director, nor gives the slightest hint as to their locality or nearest railway stations. But Moisesville is a station on the narrow-gauge line of the *Compagnie Française des chemins de fer de Santa Fé*, and by reference to a time-table I was able to reach it, mosquito-bitten and perspiring, one blazing Sunday in December, 1902. The route I chose was not the best; the proper station would have been Palacios, on the Buenos Ayres and Rosario (English) line, about eighteen hours' distance from Buenos Ayres, but arrival by the one line and departure by the other give one the opportunity of traversing several extra miles of the estate.

The Colony has already seven railway stations upon it, and comprises fifty square leagues, each of twenty-five square kilometres, an area larger than many an English county, with a scattered population, of which two thousand are Jews and rather more than two hundred colonist farmers. These farmers are located in



one of three methods: (a) in Moisesville Township; (b) in small village groups, each of four farms; and (c) isolated along lines. The first system is the oldest and worst; the last, or lineal system, is considered the best, but the second appeals alike to the clannishness of the Jew, four prolific families easily supplying Minyan, while the practical sense of the agriculturist enables him to live on his land. Four farms are grouped together, intersected by a road, with the dwelling-houses at the adjoining corners of the four farms, with Quintas, or gardens, as boundary.

Moisesville proper is rather less than a quarter of the whole Colony in extent; it is situated in the S. E., while to the N. E. lies Vavelberg, to the N. W. Monocotes and Leven, and to the S. W. Zadoc Kahn. North of Vavelberg is a tract of land, marked Jewish Colonization Association on the plan, some of which is virgin forest and which remains as yet unallotted. Palacios lies between Zadoc Kahn and Moisesville, and is an early Argentine Colony, named after its owner, and not all of it has yet been acquired by the Jewish Colonization Association. The railway lines run from north to south, the French line constituting the Eastern boundary, while the English line runs between Zadoc Kahn and Palacios. Herr Arturo Bab, the Director of Moisesville, is an agriculturist trained in Prussia, and taught for some time in the Jewish Agricultural School at Ahlem, near Hanover. He has been about seven years at Mauricio Colony, but only some months in Moisesville. The late Administrator was Mr. Miquel Cohan.

## THE PAMPA

What most impresses the European traveller about the Province of Santa Fé in general and Moisesville Colony in particular, is the treeless flatness of the place. It forms part of the endless pampa. The soil is very rich, and produces six to eight crops of lucerne or alfalfa grass every year. There is no lack of water, though it is said that since the ground has been cultivated, one has to dig two or three times as deep for it as one used to, but it is always found within nine metres of the surface. When I was there, there was, unfortunately, too much water. Tropical rain-storms had destroyed two months' crops of alfalfa and most of the wheat, and only the maize was still promising. The colonists were much depressed.

The heat was terrific; there was no shade, and it was obvious that even the cattle, some of which were fine English beasts, suffered from want of shade. Each colonist is allowed a few Eucalyptus trees gratis, and as many Paraiso trees as he wants. Paraiso trees have the advantage of being distasteful to the locust. But our colonists are either too poor or too lazy to plant trees except when an immediate profit is in sight, and so the fine Durham cows and even the native horses languish and deteriorate. Only one of the colonists at Moisesville keeps sheep, although I saw some good flocks in the part of Palacios not yet acquired by the Jewish Colonization Association, where also were some fine avenues of trees planted perhaps twenty years ago. And there are some trees round the administration building and the synagogue.

## PROSPECTS

One cannot help feeling somewhat discouraged at the prospects of Moisesville or the aptitudes of the Jewish agriculturist there. Perhaps he has more chances at Mauricio, which is in the Province of Buenos Ayres itself, and only eight hours from the capital. Land there is constantly appreciating in value, and is now worth three times what Baron de Hirsch gave for it. But at Moisesville and, indeed, throughout the Province of Santa Fé, a succession of bad years has kept the value of land stationary, and even the great English cattle-breeding estancia of St. Cristobal (two or three stations to the north of Moisesville) is said to be doing badly. The scattered Colonies in Entre Rios, on the other side of the River Plate, are said to be not more satisfactory. I met a Government Inspector of Agriculture on the railway, and he told me that hitherto the direction of our Colony had been bad, and altogether he was not very optimistic as to its future. This was the more disappointing after the congratulatory tone of the letter of Senor Iturraspe, the Intendente of Santa Fé, who visited the Colony in January, 1902. It is published in the Jewish Colonization Association Report of June 22, 1902, but, of course, allowance should be made for the inevitable exaggeration of a polite Castilian visitor.

The Jew seems to be too speculative to make a good agriculturist even in the Argentine. He is too fond of putting all his eggs into one basket. Lucerne grass paid very well, indeed, in 1901, and so he has devoted himself this year almost exclusively to lucerne. The rain spoils the crop, and he is down in the dumps, and,

especially if a Roumanian, quite prepared to throw up the game and go to Rosario or Buenos Ayres and start a business in the town, or open a shop, or travel the country as a colporteur. If he went in for dairy-farming as well as for agriculture proper, if he cultivated different kinds of crops at the same time, he would, under favorable conditions, make a little less, but the least favorable would do him no irretrievable damage, and he would have no need to be discouraged by a single failure; he would divide his risks.

And agriculture is risky in the Argentine. Nature is in some respects very kind. The soil is of almost incredible richness. There is rich loam or vegetable earth many centimetres deep all over Moisesville, but the tropics are too near to justify one in placing any reliance on the climate. One year there is drought, locusts ravage the pampas in another year, and next year heavy rains, out of season, spoil the harvest. And yet it is wonderful to see fifty-acre fields, neat and trim, with clouds of yellow butterflies hovering around, where, fifteen years ago, fierce pumas prowled and wild Indians successfully beat back the timid advances of civilization. For the improvement, candor must praise the railway as much as the Jewish Colonization Association, but even the Jewish Colonization Association may do something with the second generation of its *protégés*. The children of our colonists have nothing of the ghetto bend about them. Fearless and high-spirited, the boys and girls ride the horses bare-backed, and they at least are really attached to the land.

## RUSSIANS AND ROUMANIANS COMPARED

There is a great difference, they say, between the Russians and the Roumanians. The Russian gets on better than the Roumanian—at first. His standard of comfort is lower, he is less extravagant, more easily satisfied with small mercies, and less discouraged by the rebuffs either of nature or of man. But the Roumanian is more intelligent, and gets on better with the natives. His language is not very different from the Spanish, and a year suffices to make his Castilian fluent and even classical—no mean advantage, when it is remembered that all the year round Spanish persons have to be employed on the farm, and during harvest time every colonist has to engage at least three or four to aid him in preparing his produce for market. Hired labor, however, is expensive, and, if anything, the Roumanian's family is smaller than the Russian's, and so he has less gratuitous help. He finds it very difficult to make both ends meet, especially in a bad year, and so he gravitates to the towns.

A different case, leading to the same result, came under my notice when I left Palacios. At the next station a young man boarded the train whose friends had driven him about ten miles from Moisesville to see him off. It turned out that he was a widower with a furniture shop in Buenos Ayres, who had spent the last three days in the Colony making the acquaintance of a young lady (an attractive young Jewess of sweet seventeen) to whom he had just become engaged to be married. The farewell was affectionate in the extreme, and he was to come back again in a couple of months to fetch his bride. He was a Caucasian from

the neighborhood of Rostow, and his father had been an original colonist of Entre Rios, where they kept a Kosher butcher shop. A Spaniard in his cups had knifed a Jew called Abraham Bondarow, or some such name, and had threatened to treat my friend in the same way. He thought discretion the better part of valor, and got his people to leave the Colony to the tender mercies of the unpunished murderer. They migrated to Buenos Ayres, and still grumble that the Jewish Colonization Association allowed them only three hundred dollars for unexhausted improvements, the value of which they estimate at ten times that sum. But they have done very well.

#### JEWS IN ARGENTINE

Whatever one's opinion may be about the value or success of the Colonies themselves, there can be no doubt that it is almost exclusively owing to them that there is a Jewish population of thirty thousand in the Argentine, of which a third are to be found in the capital. They have two synagogues there, both in the Calle Libertad. In the rest of the mainland of South America there are hardly any Jews. In Panama there are a few, who have a burial ground of their own, the Hebrew inscriptions on which gave me a turn as I tramped one appallingly hot day from the Bocas to that city. In Peru there are perhaps a dozen, including the Jamaica-born daughter of an Englishman married to a dentist from the Danish Island of St. Thomas. In Chili there are hardly more, and in Brazil, although there used to be an agent of the *Alliance Israélite* at Rio, till he died a few months before my visit, there is neither synagogue nor Minyan

to be found throughout the Continent, except perhaps on Kippur. But the Argentine constitutes a notable exception, and judging from the analogies which Buenos Ayres, with its rapidly increasing population of eight hundred thousand, presents to New York, it would not be surprising to find the Jewish millionaire as frequent there a generation hence as he is now in the United States. But as to his agricultural future I am far less sanguine. For the rest, the central office of the Jewish Colonization Association in Buenos Ayres is located in a handsome mansion in the Calle Callao, where reside the two joint directors, about whom, to their credit be it said, rumor has never suggested that they have ever had a difference of opinion. The one is Mr. Cazès, formerly Director of the *Alliance Israélite* Schools at Tunis, and author of a bibliography and history of Tunis Jews. The other is Mr. Hirsch, sometime Principal of the Agricultural School at Jaffa, Mikveh Israel.

The Hope of Israel is hardly to be found in South America. My visit did not elate me, and after making every allowance for the personal equation, and for the unfortunate damage to the crops which I witnessed, not to mention the personal torment inflicted by the mosquitoes and flies, which positively swarmed over the damp soil, my prevailing sentiment was one of disappointment tempered by the interest excited by the strange birds—owls and cardinals, bustards and scissors birds—one saw, and by the snakes which were not seen but rumored. Perhaps Mauricio would have been more encouraging.

## A VISIT TO THE KOWNO RAV

Kowno—An Illegal Assembly—Table Talk—Spector's  
Responsa—His Broad-mindedness.

### KOWNO

ONE hot Thursday morning in August, 1889, I arrived at the ancient city of the Teutonic Knights after a short but wretched night in the train. The place seemed very strange at that early hour—clean, but sleepy, and very few people about—and those had no German. The two Russian (?) words that constituted my vocabulary had to be constantly brought into requisition to enable me to make for my destination. There were no cabs to be seen, and no Jews. For the Droshky it was too early, and the Jews were all in synagogue, I suppose. It was the time of the morning prayer, and there are twenty-five synagogues in Kowno without counting Minyanim, and though more than half the inhabitants are Jews, the whole population is only about fifty thousand. But every Christian that I met, Greek or Roman, seemed to recognize the words, "Staro Rabben," for he pointed onward to the west. And so I walked on and on for about an hour, right through the city, on to the straight high road leading countryward. The air was busy with the hum of bees, the roadside gay with flowers. The country-folk were trooping cheerfully into town, and the suburban houses looked comfortable and prosperous. Anything less like one's anticipation of a Russian environment, or, indeed, one's experience at Warsaw or Brest or



Wilna, could hardly be imagined. But then Kowno is much nearer to Königsberg than it is to the Russian capital.

#### AN ILLEGAL ASSEMBLY

And yet it was not many minutes before I realized that I was in Russia after all. About seven o'clock I reached a modest-looking sort of farmhouse, the summer quarters of the Kowno Rav. To my inquiry for him, a distinctly Jewish-looking servant girl pointed to an outhouse on the other side of the road, and told me in fairly intelligible Yiddish, the Rav was at prayers there. I crossed the road and tried to open the door of the shanty, but it was barred and bolted. I knocked and at last the door was cautiously opened just wide enough to enable one of our co-religionists to project a timid head. Who was I? Where did I come from? What did I want? I explained that I was a Jew and wanted to join the Minyan. Somewhat hesitatingly, I was admitted, but, once inside, I had no ground to complain of suspicion or unfriendliness. I had my Tephillin with me and was called up "Cohen." The room was bare of furniture—a table and a little Ark and one chair, in which sat a grizzled octogenarian with full face and piercing eyes. After service I introduced myself to him, and asked why there had been so much unwillingness to admit me. "O," said he, "we are in Goluth and it is illegal to hold Minyan out of town. Even you, for merely joining it, have made yourself liable to a fine of one hundred roubles! We thought you were the police, but as you are an Englishman, and the son of an honored friend, come and have breakfast with me."

## TABLE TALK

During breakfast, and for some hour or two after, he talked much and despondently of Jewish disabilities in Russia, and contrasted his country's persecution with the liberty we enjoy in England. To him the streets of London were almost as familiar as the paths of his own Nahardea, although, but for one memorable journey to meet Montefiore on his mission to Czar Nicholas, he has hardly moved out of Kowno since he left his first Rabbinate in Novoradok. He was in constant correspondence with several London friends, was intimately acquainted with the affairs of Shechita there, and familiar with all the sectarian politics of Whitechapel. He was a staunch ally of our ecclesiastical authorities as lawfully constituted, and deprecated and denounced the mischief-making and turbulence of "ungrateful" countrymen of his own, who caused strife and discord in the land of their adoption.

Of himself he talked little and of affairs so diplomatically and sensibly that, though evidently no longer in his prime, he thoroughly justified his great reputation. And his reputation was unmistakably great—at Paris and at Berlin, at London and at Jerusalem, as much as at Wilna itself, the Kehilla of his son—appropriately styled "Rabbinowitz," the "Rabbi's Son." All along the Russo-Polish railway line I had heard of him and his goodness. Not the least of his admirers was a New Woman of Riga, who wrote German novels and sketches and articles, and who was often the literary mouthpiece of her persecuted brothers and sisters. She died a couple of years ago, poor thing, or I had not dared say so much.

## SPECTOR'S RESPONSA

A few months later and Rabbi Isaac Elkan Spector was dead. He was mourned as a very Prince in Israel. The loss can never be quite made good, for the position he held was unique. It was due not so much to the authority he compelled as an unrivalled Talmudist, as to the complete confidence he enjoyed for tact and unselfish singleness of purpose. He leaves us a formidable array of literature, sufficient to command the respect of even so doughty a bibliographer as Steinschneider. His three most important works are collections of Responsa, for he was probably the most consulted of modern Rabbis.

One of his Responsa will illustrate the continuity of Jewish thought throughout the Middle Ages and right through the altered conditions induced by scientific discoveries. It is an examination into the question of the relative sanctity of the proof sheet, as to whether Hebrew proof sheets may be destroyed, or should be preserved in common with all that is written in the sacred language for a sacred purpose. The Rabbi decides that they are in their very nature ephemeral, and full of faults, and that it is a mercy to destroy them. Can a question appear more trivial? And yet it is due to our loving regard for such trifles that the whole literary world is justified in being on the *qui vive* for some fresh lucky discovery that we may owe to research, in some Genizah or synagogue *cache*.

## HIS BROAD-MINDEDNESS

Although himself one of the most pious men in Russia, the Rabbi was what is known as a *מקיל* toward

others. He judged all men charitably, and ever strove to make the thorny path of his religion a little broader, a little easier. And he could afford to do this, for no Pharisee of them all had ever ventured to charge him with laxity. He was Hillel to the Shammai of his Litvak colleagues. Especially was this so in the case of *ענוות*, women whose husbands had disappeared, and whom the letter of the law precluded from marrying again. For these he ever sought to find a *היתר* and to accept as proof of widowhood what was only circumstantial evidence of a stronger kind. Thus, in one of the Responsa in *עין יצחק* (vol. I. II, 31) he cites the case of a poor woman whose husband had been lost in England's huge metropolis. But a body had been found in the Thames, and the police photograph of the corpse had been identified by the Beth Din here as that of the man whose photograph the wife-widow produced to them. The Kowno Rav thought this quite enough, but I can remember my dear teacher, the late Rabbi Jacob Reinowitz, himself a member of the Beth Din, telling me of it with just the slightest shadow of a shade of shocked disapproval. I fancy this was the very case, but among the Responsa there are several others of a similar nature referable to London. It is not so easy to identify them, as it was to identify the "found dead," for the author, with characteristic modesty, suppresses all names of places and persons, and eliminates from his report all but the facts and the argument. Throughout orthodox Jewry he was consulted as the highest authority on Din, his certificate of competency was eagerly sought by *Rabbinatscandidaten*, and his imprimatur dearly prized by the Hebrew publisher. His Haskama fre-

quently prefaces modern Rabbinic books, even where it merely contains the naïve business statement that he has paid for them in advance: ונתתי דמי קרימה כנהוג

Spector's great reputation was in no sense derived from official position or external glories. Of the paraphernalia of the ecclesiastical dignitary he possessed none, unless, perhaps, as such you can regard his Meshareth and Sopher and the half-score of *unpaid* Minyan men, who trudged three miles every morning along the flat and dusty high-road, in order to pray with him. Even in Kowno the only officially recognized Rabbi was the *Kronrabbiner*. Still, the Russian Government, on matters affecting its Jewish subjects as a class, treated with him rather than its own functionary. It was wise enough to recognize the fact that Rabbi Isaac was a representative man although not an official. And in this it resembled a wide-awake Bishop, who preferred to deal with an energetic Non-conformist Minister in a parish rather than with its pompous Rector. If even Russia's unfriendly Government missed him when he died, what shall we say who are of his own people, and who mourn in him one who was known throughout Israel as רבן של כל בני הנולה—  
“the Teacher of all Sons of the Captivity?”

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